BIG COMIC SUPERIOR

あずみ

小山ゆう



七 草笛とマント

BIG COMICS

あずみ 七 草笛とマント

小山ゆう

小学館
BC3547

9784091835475

ISBN4-09-183547-3

C9979 ¥486E

1929979004866

定価510円 本体486円

雑誌 45785－47 小学館



あずみ

■7巻のあらすじ

大坂城落城の際、秀頼の介錯を果たしたあずみの心に、ふと徳川家康に対する不信感が生まれた。そんな時、爺は“柳生新陰流”を名乗る剣士達の襲撃に遭い、危ういところをあずみに助けられる（第1話）。

柳生新陰流といえば、徳川お抱えの流派。「今まで、徳川のために闘ってきた自分たちに、なぜ？」…あずみの徳川に対する不信の念はさらに膨らんで…!?（第2話）。

BIG COMIC SUPERIOR

AZUMI



あずみ

Koyama Yū

7

The Reed Pipes And The Cloak

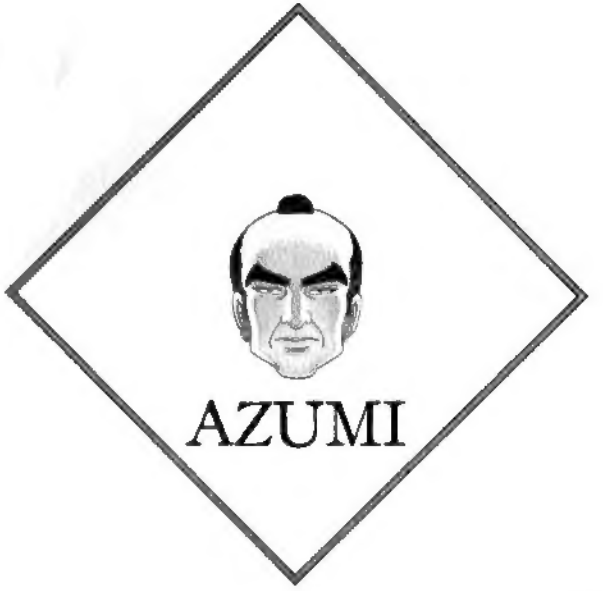
BIG COMICS

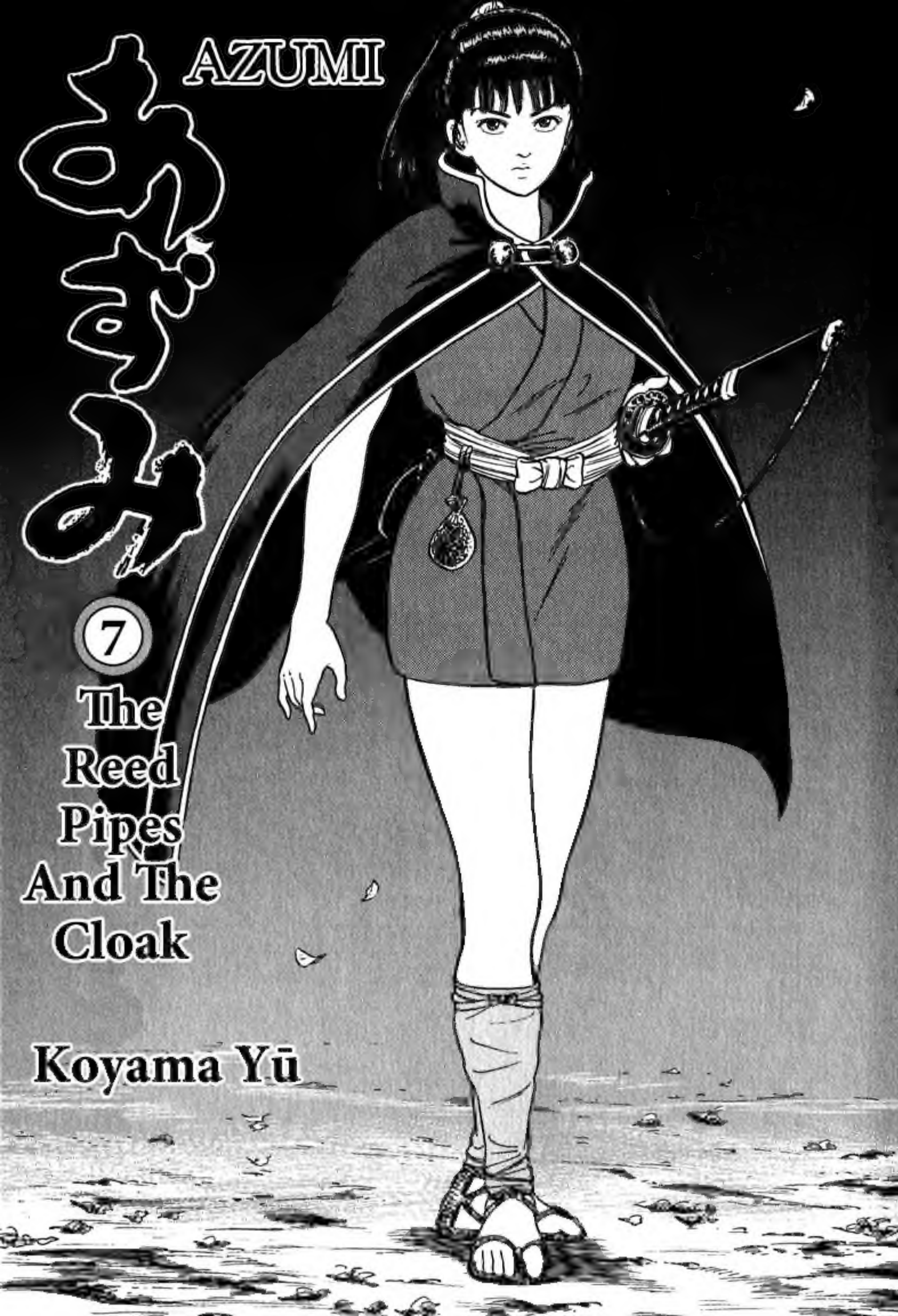
小山ゆう

七

草笛とマント

小学館




AZUMI
あずみ
7
The Reed Pipes And The Cloak
Koyama Yū



AZUMI

7. THE REED PIPES AND THE CLOAK

CHAPTER 1: LIFE AND PRIDE.....5

CHAPTER 2: THE NIGHT OF THE FIREFLIES.....29

CHAPTER 3: HIDETADA AND MUNENORI.....59

CHAPTER 4: THE WHEREABOUTS OF TRUTH.....83

CHAPTER 5: THE TRAP.....113

CHAPTER 6: OUTLAWS AND HAVING PRIDE IN ONE'S OWN SKILLS ...137

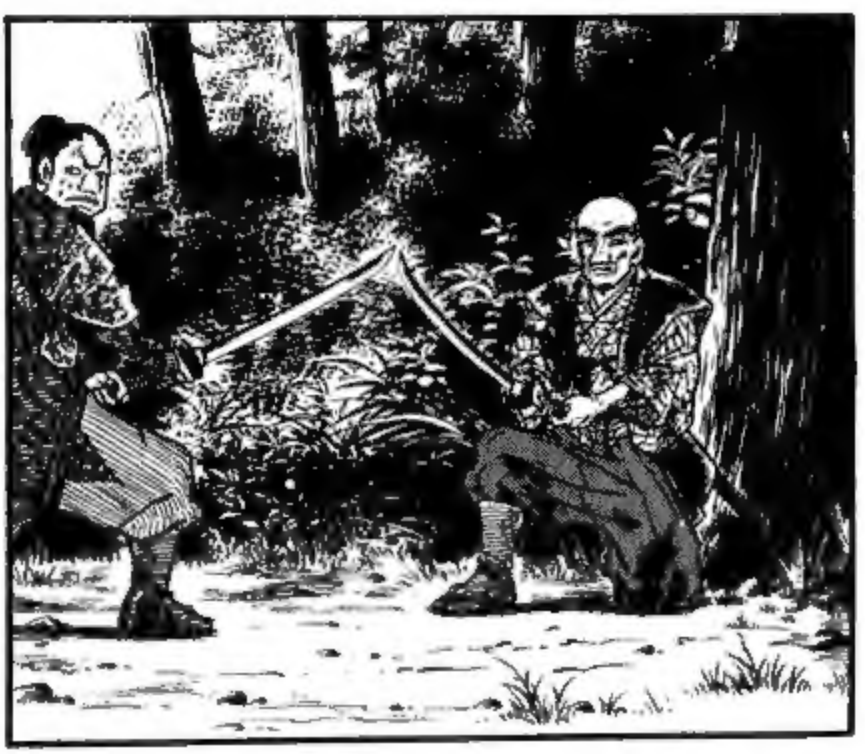
CHAPTER 7: BY DECREE.....161

CHAPTER 8: THE REED PIPES AND THE CLOAK.....191

CHAPTER 1: LIFE AND PRIDE












DON'T WORRY, IT'S JUST A FLESH WOUND!
PANT PANT PANT
GRAMPA! WHERE WERE YOU HIT!?
OH!


PANT PANT PANT PANT PANT
THIS GUY'S INJURED TOO...

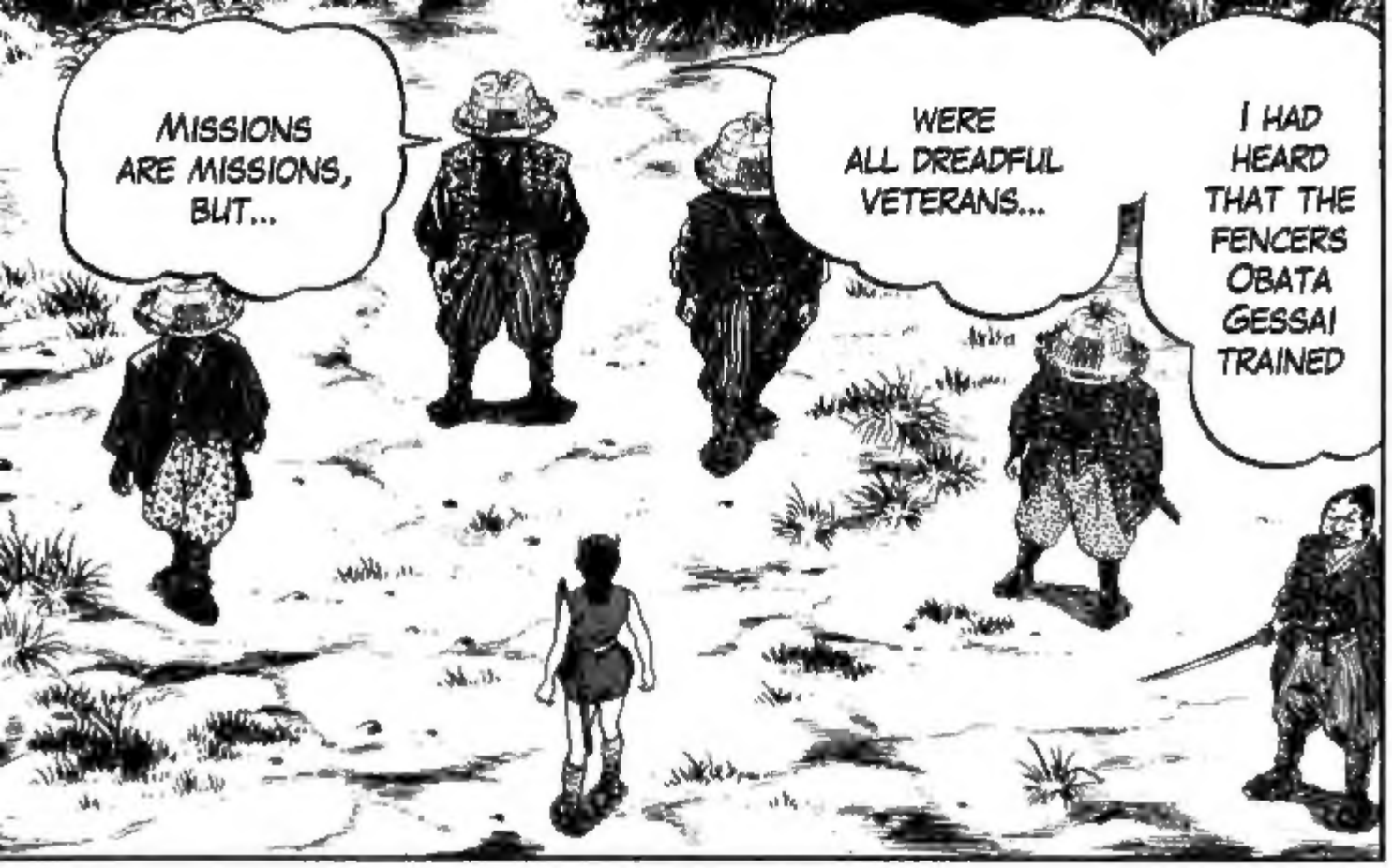

COULD THAT GIRL BE...
I HARDLY BELIEVE IT, BUT ...


WHY ARE THE OTHER FOUR JUST WATCHING !?
BUT IF THEY'RE TRYING TO KILL GRAMPA...


ONE OF THOSE FENCERS THAT OBATA GESSAI RAISED AND TAUGHT HOW TO KILL!?


THIS IS A SUR-PRISE...
SO IT SEEMS...
.....


TAKE OFF THOSE BAMBOO HATS! I'LL BE YOUR OPPONENT!
WHO'RE YOU!?


I HAD HEARD THAT THE FENCERS OBATA GESSAI TRAINED
WERE ALL DREADFUL VETERANS...
MISSIONS ARE MISSIONS, BUT...


WE ARE MEN WHO STRIVE EARNESTLY ON THE PATH OF THE SWORD.
WE CAME LOOKING FORWARD TO A MATCH AGAINST THOSE FENCERS, BUT...
TO THINK THAT THERE'S EVEN A GIRL LIKE YOU...


PLEASE, HAVE A MATCH WITH ME.
UHM!
I'LL GO...


BUT THE YAGYŪ... I'M SURE THAT THEY'RE IEYASU'S EMPLOYEES!
YAGYŪ SHIN-KAGE-RYŪ!?


Yagyû Shinkageryû, Dobashi Matagorō!


COME AT ME!


HUH, GRAMPA !?
WHY'RE IEYASU'S EMPLOYEES ATTACKING YOU!?


COME!
AZUMI, EH?
.....
LEAVE THE INQUIRIES FOR LATER AND FIGHT, AZUMI!
ALL RIGHT!
IS IEYASU REALLY THE MAN THEY SAY HE IS...?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN!?




BASED ON ONLY THE SLIGHTEST MOVE-MENTS, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
AZUMI...YOUR EYES CAN ALREADY READ WHICH WAY YOUR OPPONENTS' SWORD WILL MOVE
S-SHE'S FAST...
9


THE SWORD SHOULD'VE COME DIAGONALLY FROM THE RIGHT...W-WHY WAS I CUT FROM THE LEFT!?
I... IM-POS-SIBLE !!
8
HURRY UP AND STOP THE BLOOD!


YES! I CAN READ THEM!
HOWEVER, IF YOUR OPPONENTS ARE SKILLED, THEY CAN READ YOUR NEXT ATTACK FROM YOUR MOVEMENTS TOO!


YES!
TRY IT!
BUT WITH YOUR SPEED, YOU CAN MAKE THEM READ YOUR MOVEMENTS ON PURPOSE... THEN DO THE EXACT OPPOSITE!
IT WENT WELL, GRAMPA!


WHO'S MY NEXT OPPONENT !?

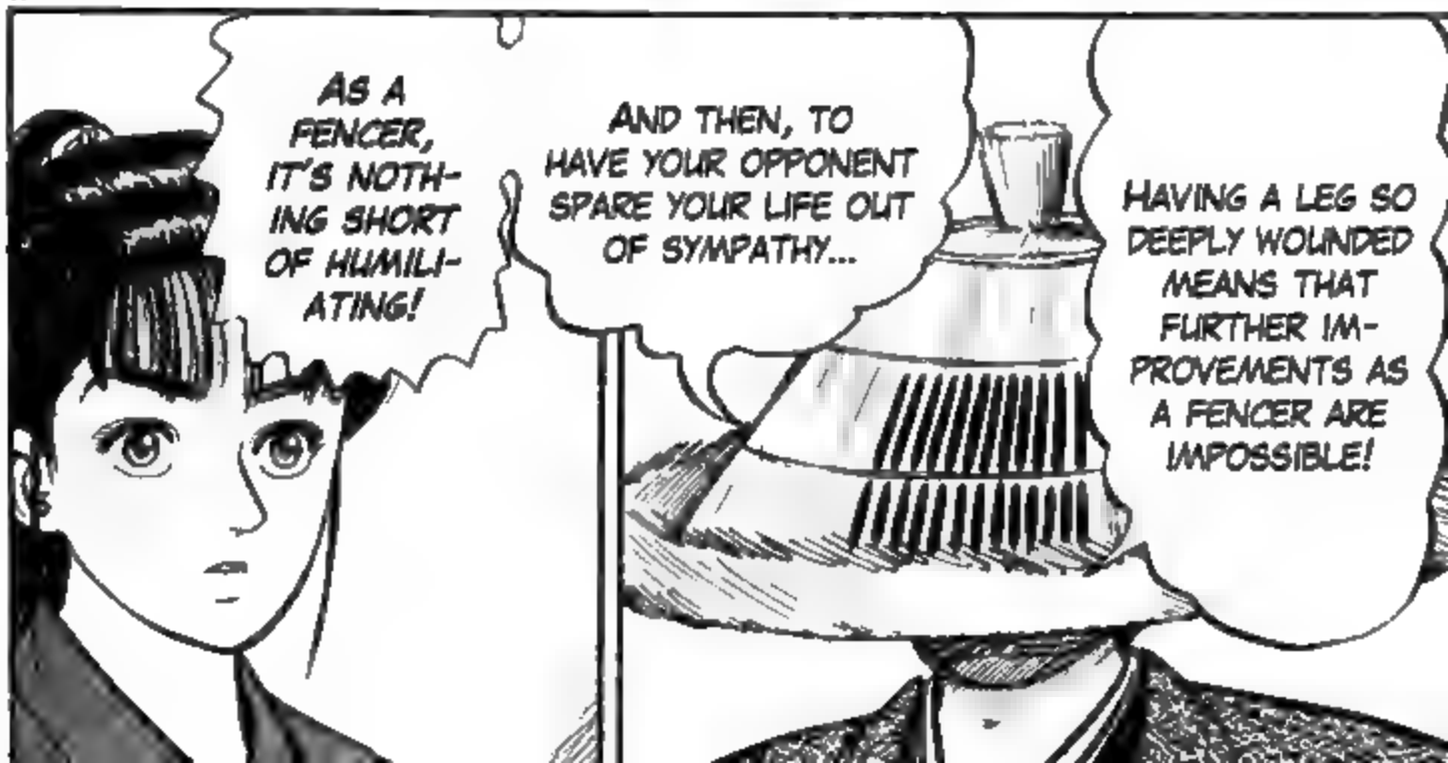

I CUT AN ARTERY. HURRY UP AND STOP THE BLOOD!
YOU'RE ALREADY INJURED!
YOU STILL AREN'T FINISHED WITH ME!


UHM!?


WHAT'S WITH THAT ATTITUDE!?
BUT .


I'M EARNESTLY IMPRESSED...
A SPLENDID ABILITY ...


AH!
YOU ASK WHY!?
W-WHY !?


AS A FENCER, IT'S NOTHING SHORT OF HUMILIATING!
AND THEN, TO HAVE YOUR OPPONENT SPARE YOUR LIFE OUT OF SYMPATHY...
HAVING A LEG SO DEEPLY WOUNDED MEANS THAT FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS AS A FENCER ARE IMPOSSIBLE!


RATHER THAN LIVE ON AND SUFFER IN DISGRACE,
A FENCER CHOSES DEATH WITH PRIDE!
WEREN'T YOU TAUGHT THAT!?


...


YOU'LL FIGHT AGAINST US!
YAGYŪ SHINKAGERYŪ, OGATA TAICHIRŌ!
SAME SCHOOL, TACHINO YŌSUKE!
SAME SCHOOL, KITAMURA SAMON!




AZUMI,
IT'S LIKE THAT MAN SAYS.
WHEN FIGHTING AGAINST PROUD FENCERS,



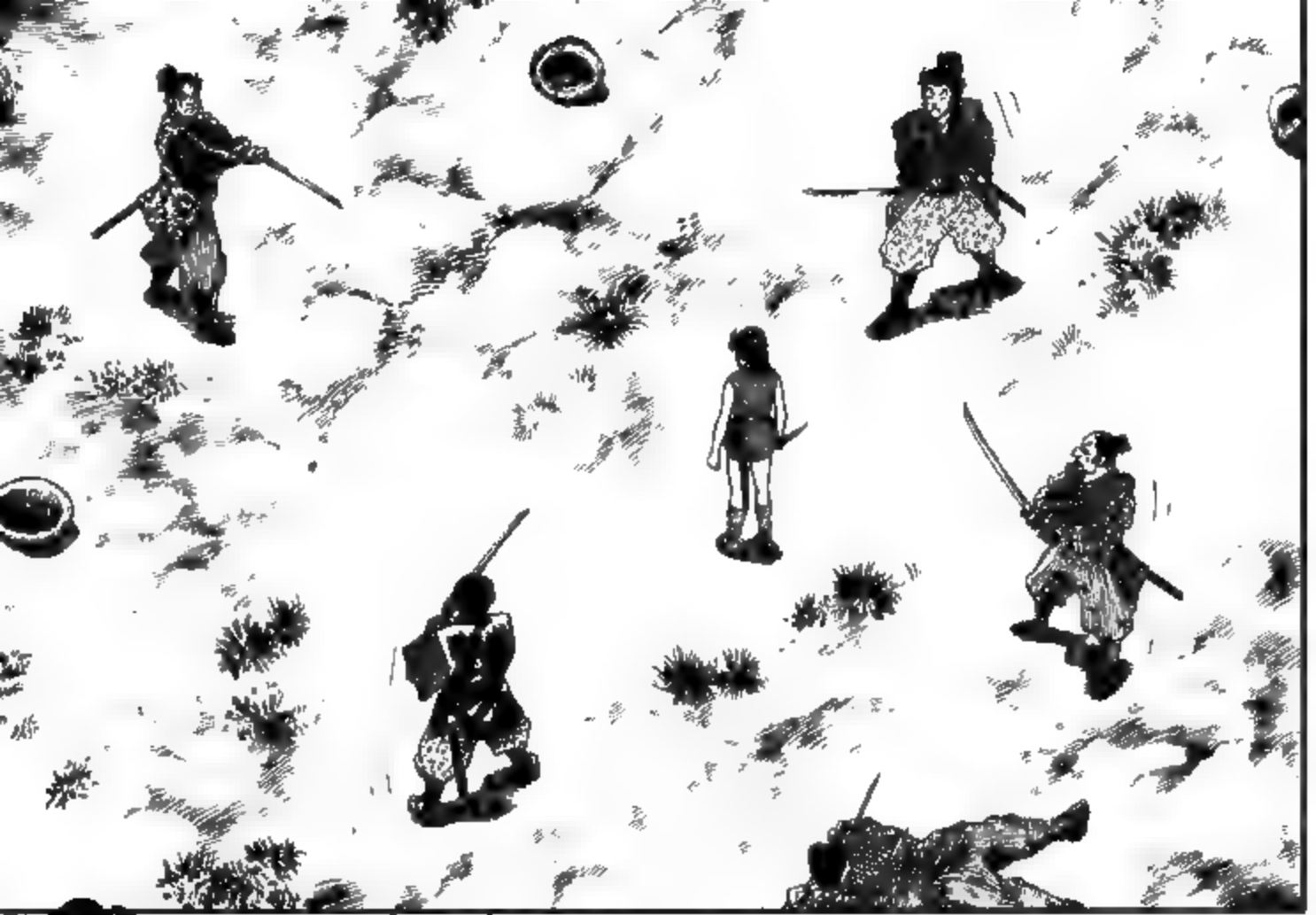



YOU MUST KILL THEM!


UNBE-LIEV-ABLE...
IS SHE ALREADY ACCUSTOMED TO BLOODSHED AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE!?
THAT SPEED... AND THE SERIOUS-NESS OF HER COM-POSURE...


DOES THIS MEAN THAT FOR THESE MEN... PRIDE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN LIFE...?
CHOSING TO DIE WITH PRIDE RATHER THAN GO ON LIVING SUFFERING IN DISGRACE...

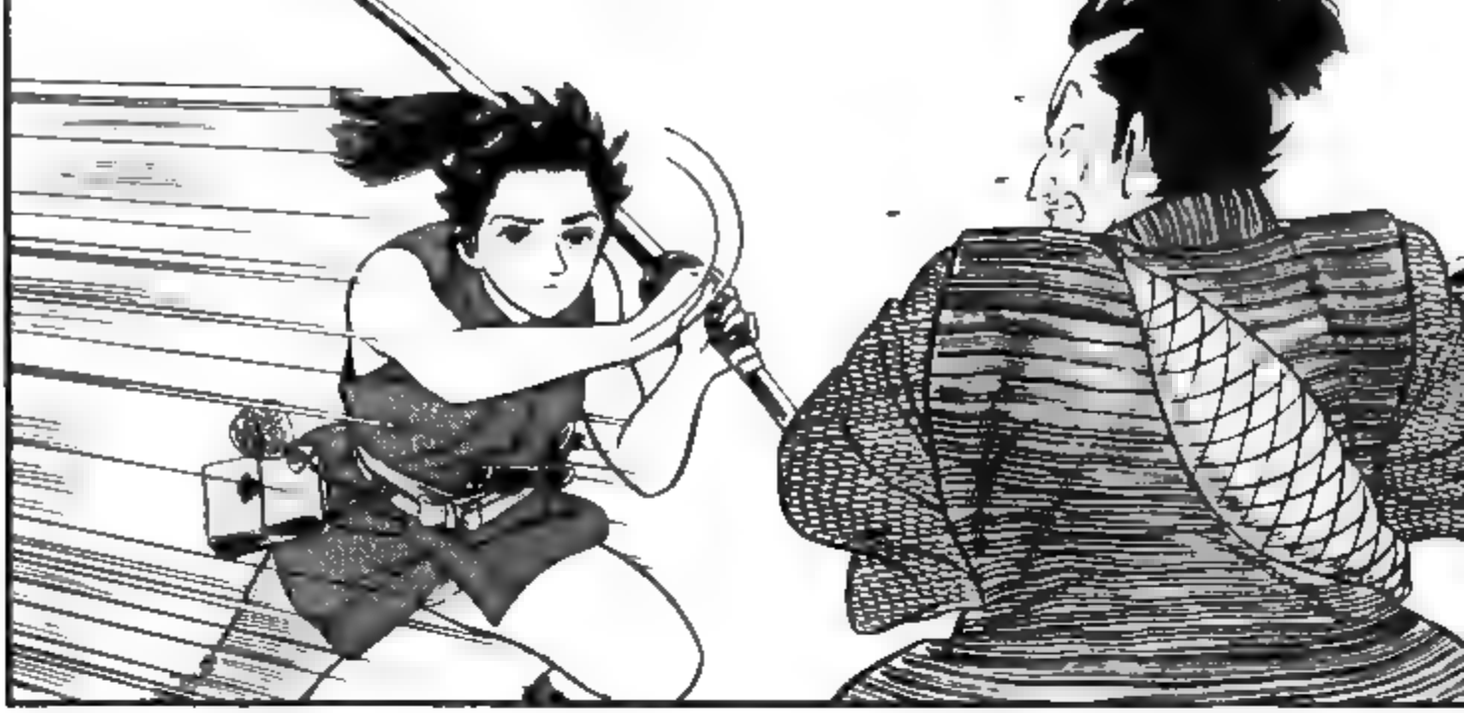

THEY DIDN'T INFORM ME WHICH SCHOOL OBATA GESSAI WAS FROM, BUT...
WHAT'S THIS GIRL'S SCHOOL !?
STANDING LIKE THAT, WITHOUT SHOWING IF SHE'S PREPARED TO ATTACK OR DEFEND... IS THAT A "NEUTRAL POSITION"...?
SHE'S JUST...
16
A "NEUTRAL POSITION" IS SAID TO BE A STANCE THAT A MASTER SWORDSMAN MEDITATES ON, PURSUES... AND REACHES ONLY IN THE END... AND THIS LITTLE GIRL IS IMITATING THAT, WHETHER CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT...
STOP MESSING AROUND WITH US!






AZUMI... IT'S DANGEROUS TO LET THEM GET CLOSE LIKE THAT! THEY'RE PREPARED TO HIT EACH OTHER IF THEY HAVE TO!
THEIR DISTANCES ARE SHRINKING... ALL THREE OF THEM PLAN TO ATTACK AT THE SAME TIME...


ガ
ビ



20






T...TH-
THAT'S...
A-ABSURD!


DO YOU STILL WANT TO DO IT!?

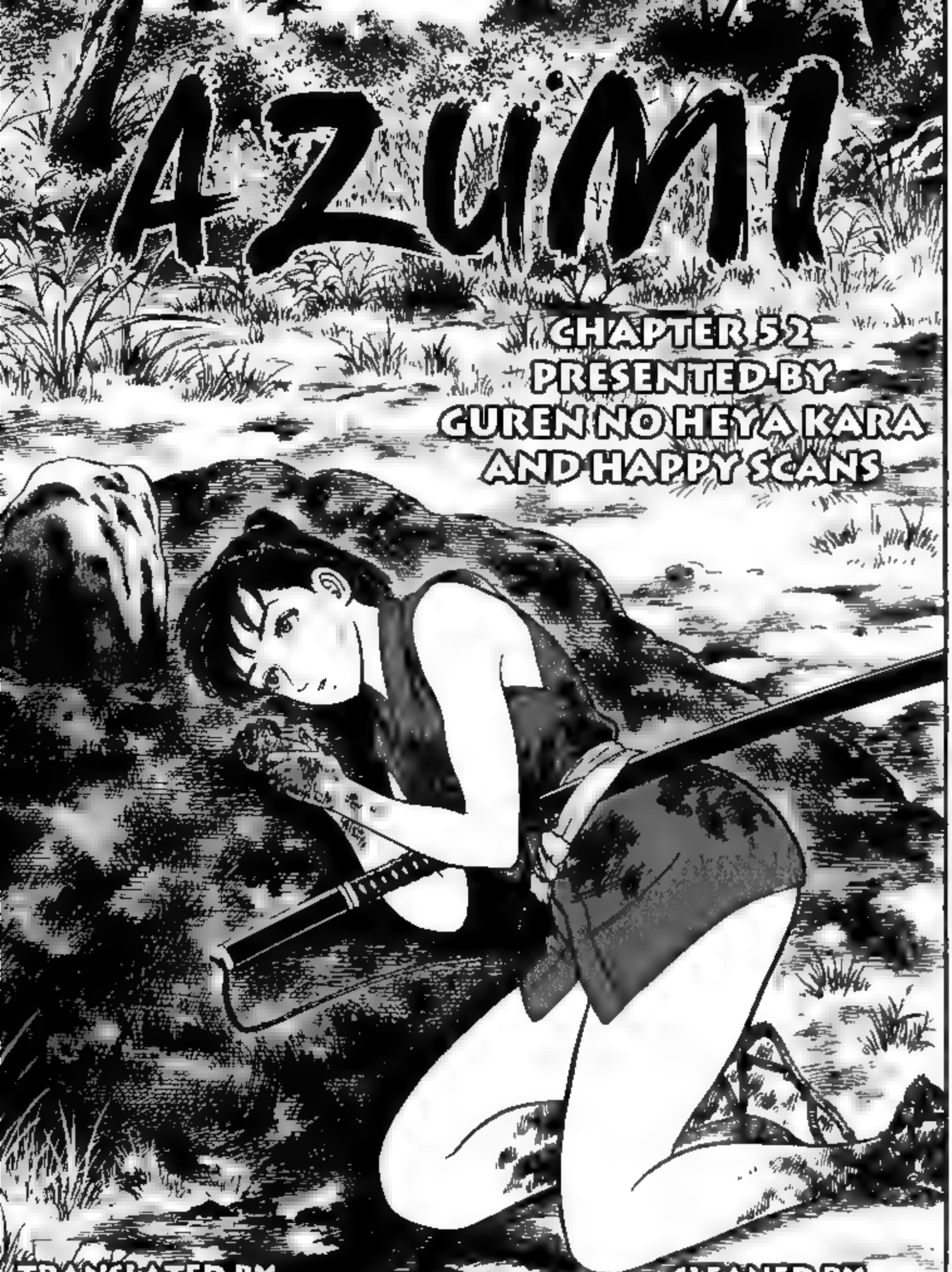

.....
MORE THAN LIFE!?


.....


AND EVEN SO, YOU VALUE PRIDE
YOU CAN SEE HOW THIS WILL END...

AZUMI

CHAPTER 52
PRESENTED BY
GUREN NO HEYA KARA
AND HAPPY SCANS



TRANSLATED BY
GUREN

CLEANED BY
MIKJAK

PROOFREADING
BY SOFAKINGAC

TYPESETTING BY
KAZUHIKO



24



Chapter 2: The Night of the Fireflies




.....
WHICH ONE DO YOU CHOOSE !?
OR PRIDE!?
LIFE!?
STOP...
OGATA-SAN...
CHOOSE TO LIVE!

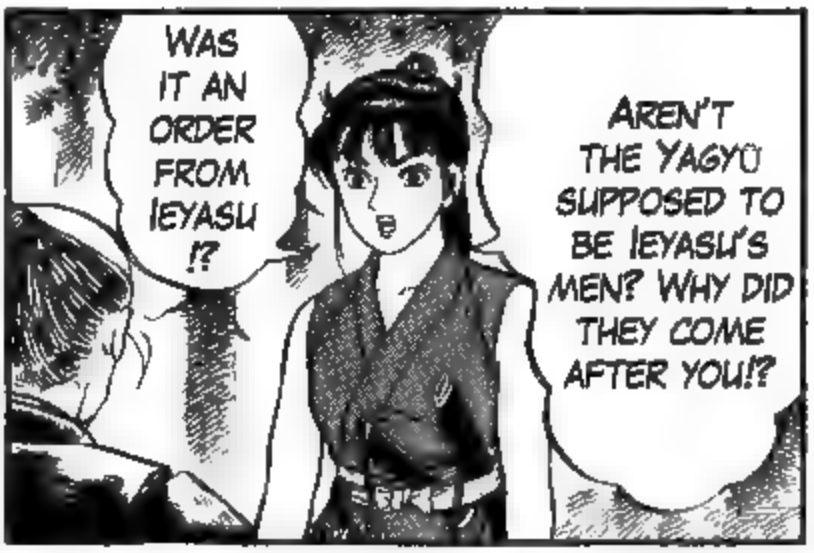
2


IT'S OBVI-OUS!

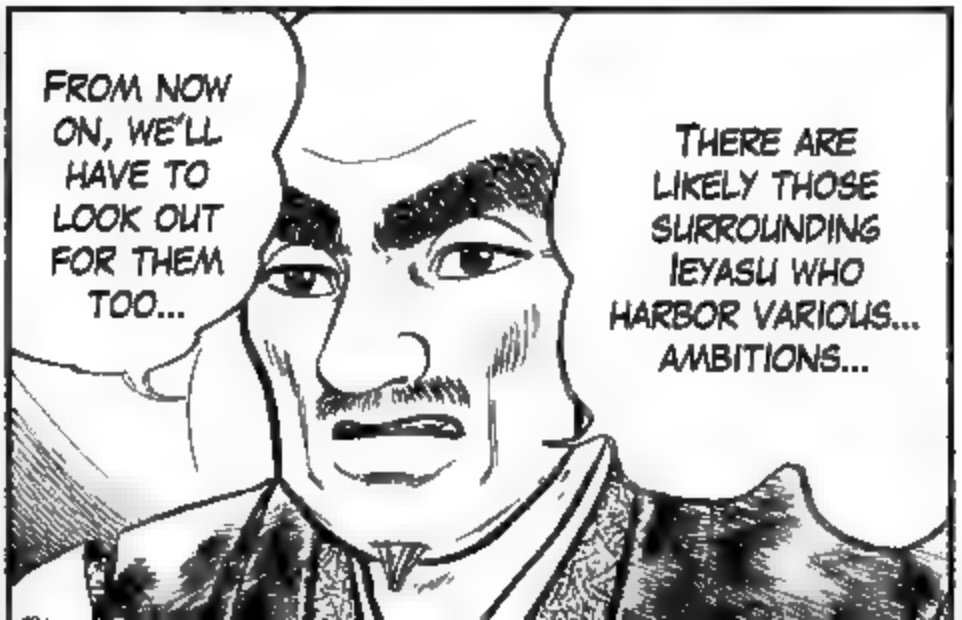

OOOOOH!
SHWIN
AAAH!
AAAH... OGATA-SAN TOO...


GREAT JOB!
GRAMPA ...


WHAT DOES IT MEAN!?
THEN...
NO...


WAS IT AN ORDER FROM IEYASU !?
AREN'T THE YAGYÜ SUPPOSED TO BE IEYASU'S MEN? WHY DID THEY COME AFTER YOU!?


. . .

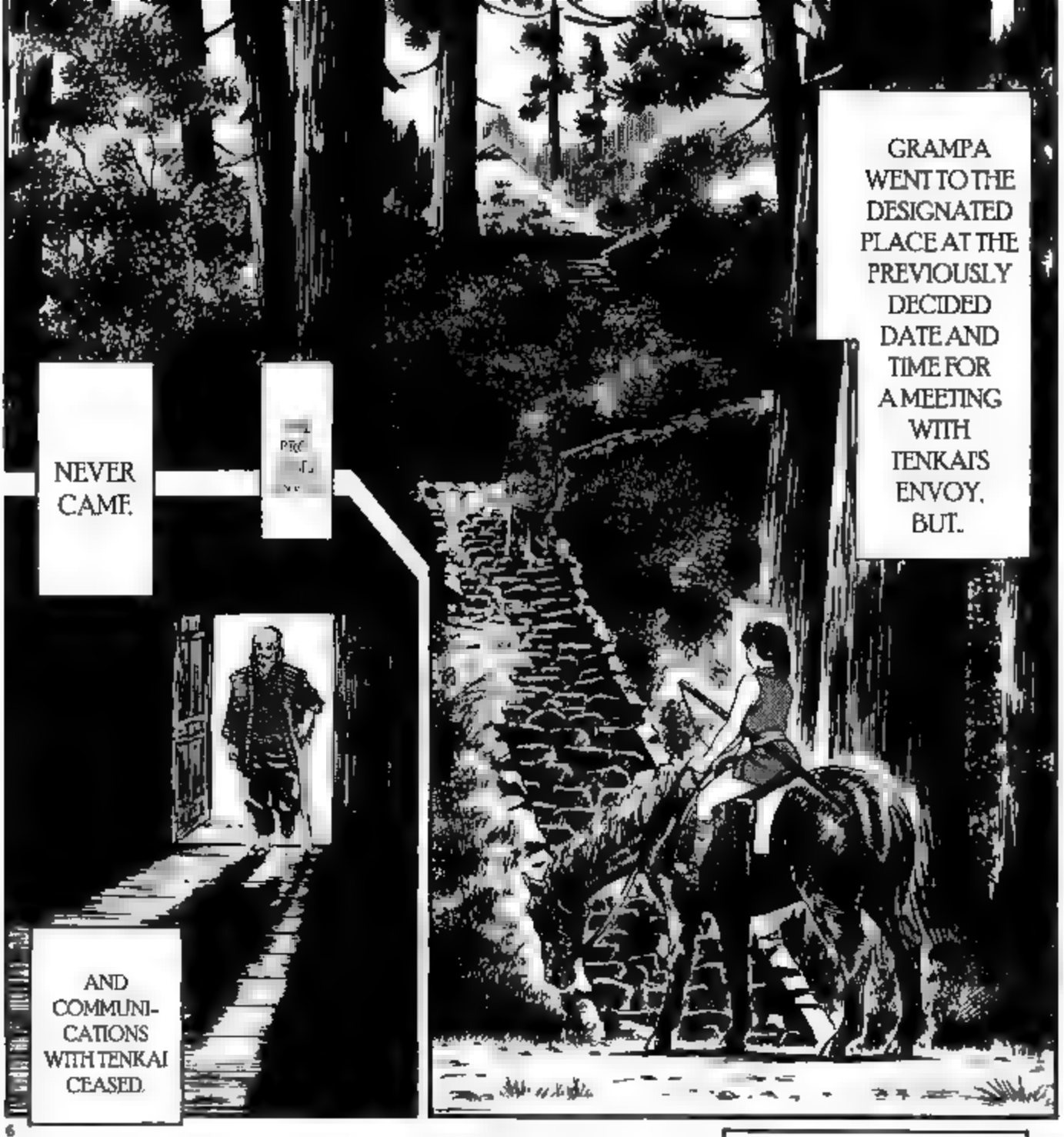

FROM NOW ON, WE'LL HAVE TO LOOK OUT FOR THEM TOO...
THERE ARE LIKELY THOSE SURROUNDING IEYASU WHO HARBOR VARIOUS... AMBITIONS...


AZUMI PASSED THE DAYS NURSING HIM BACK TO HEALTH.
GRAMPA'S SWORD WOUNDS WERE SERIOUS, AND FOR A WHILE HE BECAME UNABLE TO MOVE..






IEYASU, WHO WIPED OUT THE TOYOTOMI, WAS ON HIS WAY BACK TO SUNPU FROM ŌSAKA. NATURALLY, TENKAI WAS WITH HIM.


GRAMPA WENT TO THE DESIGNATED PLACE AT THE PREVIOUSLY DECIDED DATE AND TIME FOR A MEETING WITH TENKAI'S ENVOY. BUT.
NEVER CAME.
AND COMMUNI-CATIONS WITH TENKAI CEASED.


RELUCTANTLY... HE DECIDED TO JOURNEY TO SUNPU, FOLLOWING TENKAI, WHILE WAITING FOR HIS BODY TO RECOVER.








YES!
LET'S SPEND THE NIGHT IN THIS POST TOWN
THERE'S PROBABLY A FESTI-VAL OR SOME-THING.
YOU CAN HEAR EVEN DRUM SOUNDS.
THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE WALKING AROUND HOLDING TORCH-LIGHTS. .
WHAT!? I WONDER WHAT'S GOING ON...


I'LL REST.
YOU GO.
LET'S GO LOOK FOR A BIT, GRAMPA!


BUT NO ONE CAME.
DON'T WORRY. IF SOMEONE HAD WANTED TO ATTACK US, THEY WOULD'VE HAD PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES...
.....

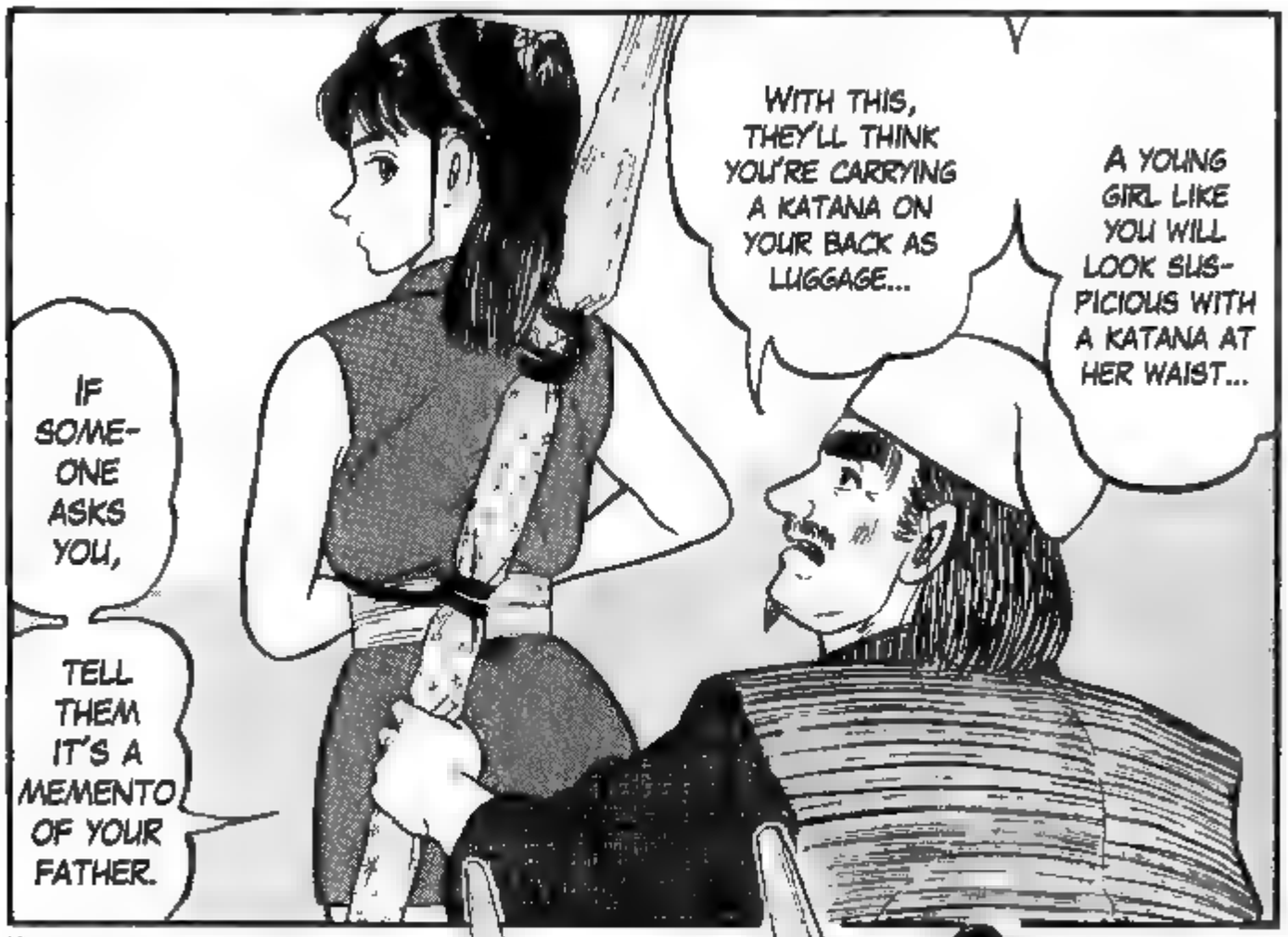

.....
I WON'T GO!
WELL,
BUT...
YES.


.....
...IT'S NOT JUST THAT...
GO, HAVE SOME FUN! YOU'VE EARNED IT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME BEING ATTACKED AGAIN WHEN YOU'RE NOT AROUND.


.....
GO, TAKE A BREA-THER!
YOU DON'T NEED TO BE CON-CERNED!

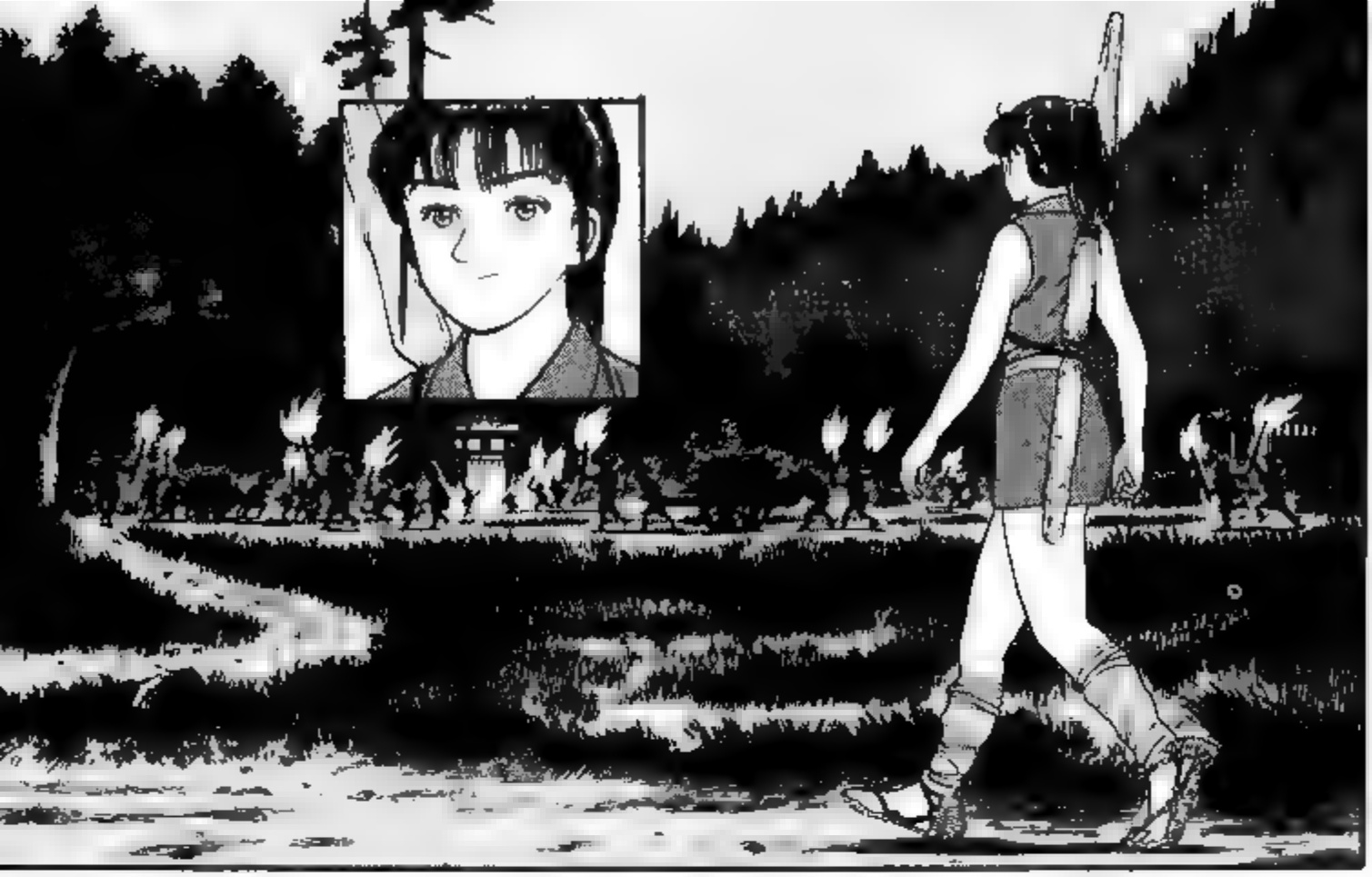

IN CASE SOMETHING DOES HAPPEN... TAKE THE KATANA WITH YOU.
AH, WAIT!


OK, THEN, I'LL GO SEE THE FESTIVAL AND COME BACK!


WITH THIS, THEY'LL THINK YOU'RE CARRYING A KATANA ON YOUR BACK AS LUGGAGE...
A YOUNG GIRL LIKE YOU WILL LOOK SUSPICIOUS WITH A KATANA AT HER WAIST...
IF SOMEONE ASKS YOU,
TELL THEM IT'S A MEMENTO OF YOUR FATHER.


OKAY THEN, I'M GOING!


MY FATHER'S MEMENTO...EH?




I ALREADY SAW A FESTIVAL WITH UKIHA...
HYOGA AND AMAGI...
BOOM
BOOM
BO BO BO BO
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
WOOOO
AAAH!
YAAH!!


AMAZ-ING..
WAAH!
WAAH!
EVERYONE IS DANCING LIKE IN A TRANCE..
YA'AH!
YA'AH!
YA'AH!
YA'AH!
AND EVERY-ONE LIVES WITH THEIR OWN FEEL-INGS AND MEMORIES...
MANY THINGS HAPPEN...
THAT'S RIGHT... ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE. PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THIS WORLD.
AAAH!
AAAH!
LIKE THEY'RE NOT REALLY HAVING FUN, JUST TRYING TO FORGET THE HARD AND PAINFUL THINGS.
EVERYONE'S FACIAL EXPRESSIONS... THEY'RE LIKE...
IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THAT FESTIVAL I SAW.
YA'AH!
AAAH!


ドドドドド
AAAH!

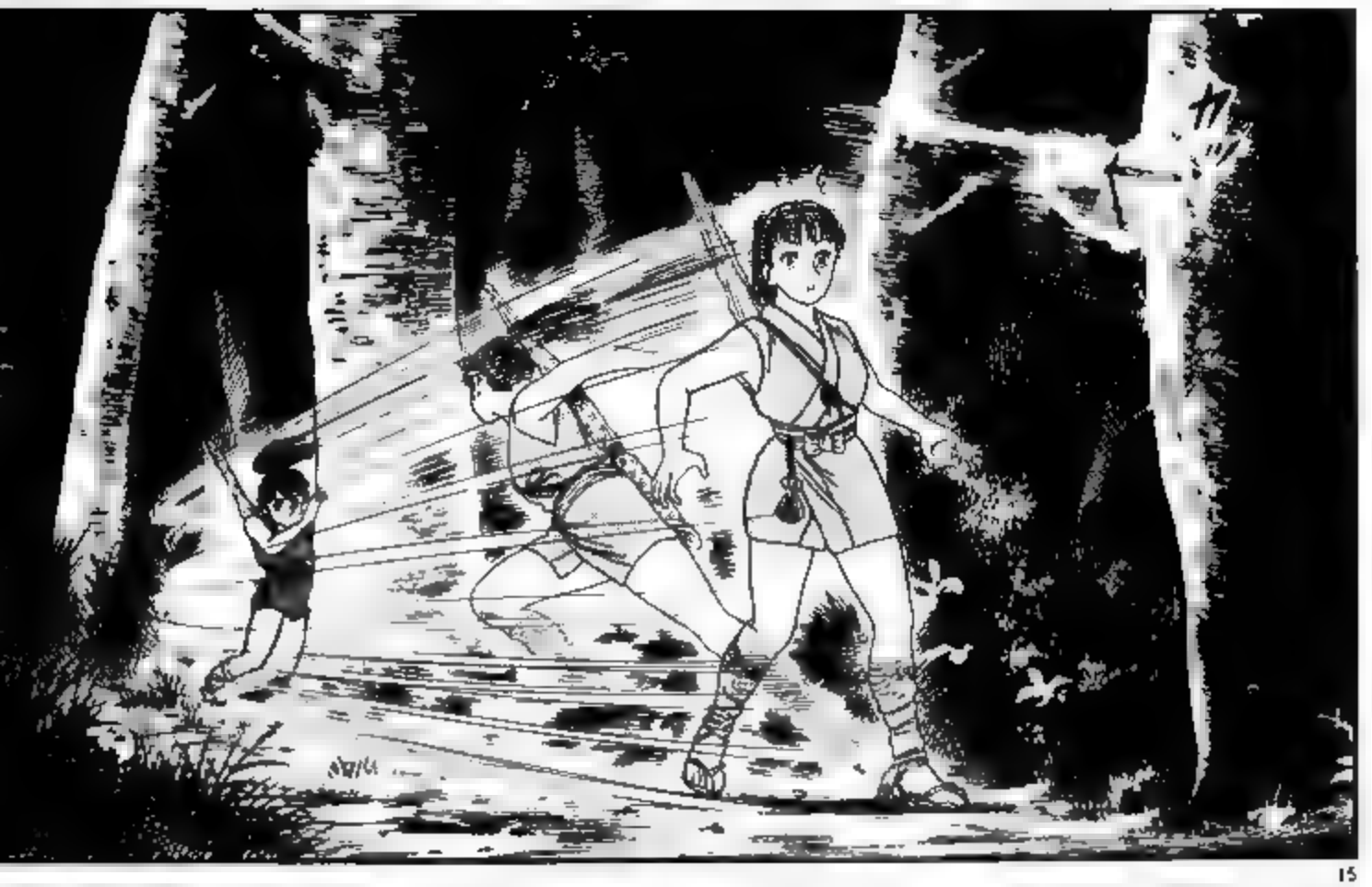

AAAH!
ドドドドド
AAA!


YAAA!


I WONDER WHAT THAT IS? SINCE SOME TIME AGO, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN...
MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING OVER THERE TOO!?
AAAH!
ドドドドド



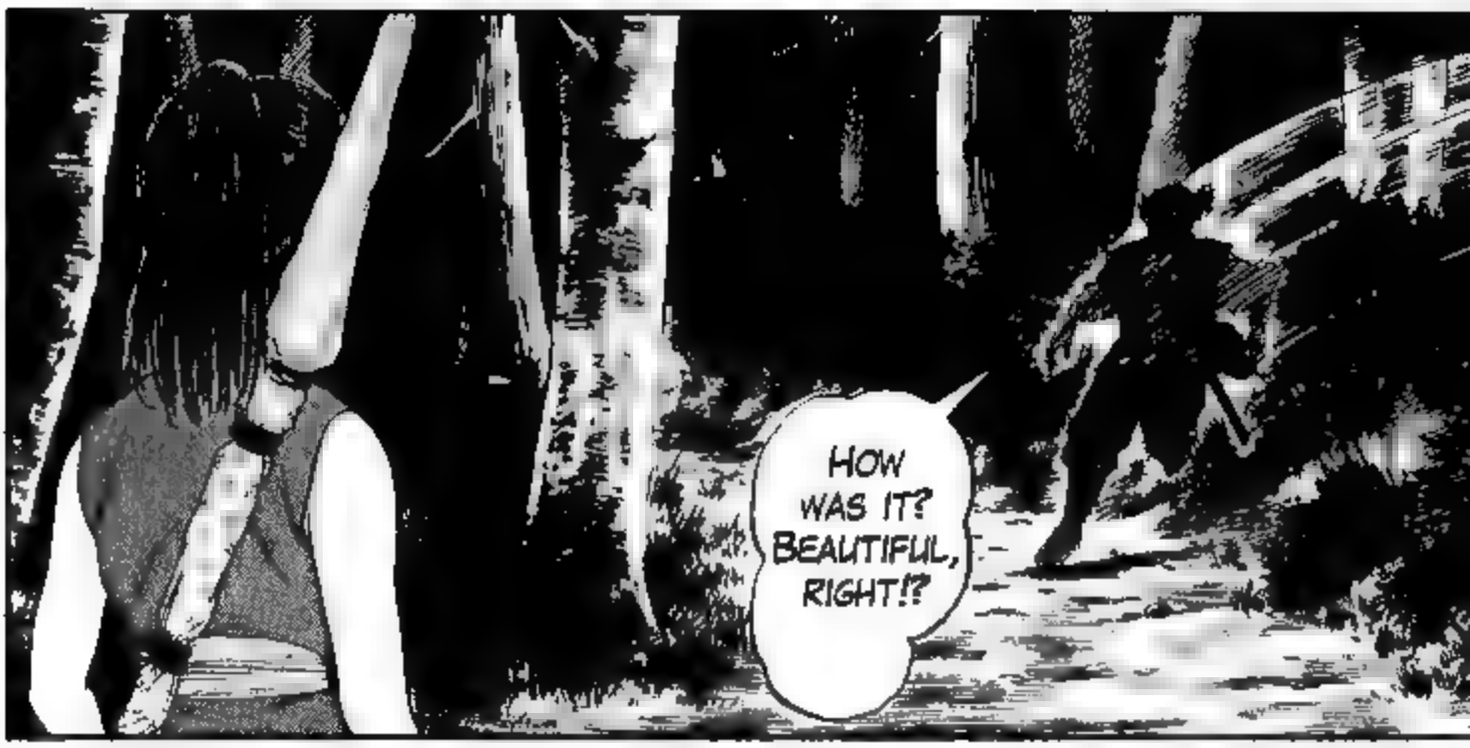






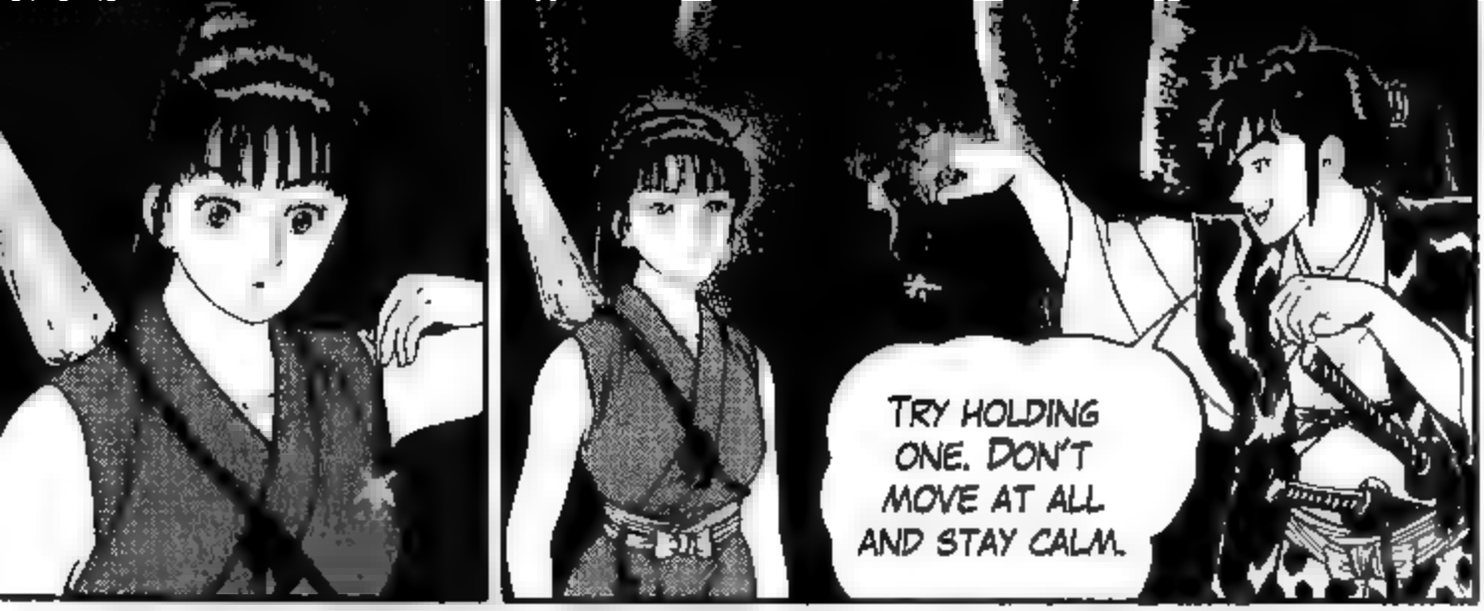

IT'S BEAU-TIFUL, YOU KNOW.
LOOK AT THIS!
HEEEY, DON'T BE SCARED!




HOW WAS IT? BEAUTIFUL, RIGHT!?


LOOK!
"FIRE-WORKS" !?


FIREWORKS I MADE!
THESE ARE...


TRY HOLDING ONE. DON'T MOVE AT ALL AND STAY CALM.


IF YOU DO LIKE THIS...
WAIT UNTIL THE FLAME DIES DOWN...AND BECOMES RED...


FIREWORKS LIKE PINE NEEDLES COME OUT...
LOOK!




YEP, IT IS!
BEAU-TIFUL, RIGHT?


UHHHM...IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN THIS...
I'M AZUMI.


AND YOU?
I'M KOZUKI KAZUMA.
EEEH!?... HOW MYS-TERIOUS...


THIS IS MY DAD'S MEMENTO, THAT'S ALL!
PLUS, YOU'VE GOT A KATANA ON YOUR BACK...


YOU'RE A GIRL, WHY DO YOU SAY "ORE"?
WHY DO YOU SAY IT LIKE THAT?


OVER THERE
HEY, WHERE'RE YOU GOING!?
UHHHM..


ARE YOU GOING...?
THERE'S THAT...
BUT OVER THERE ...

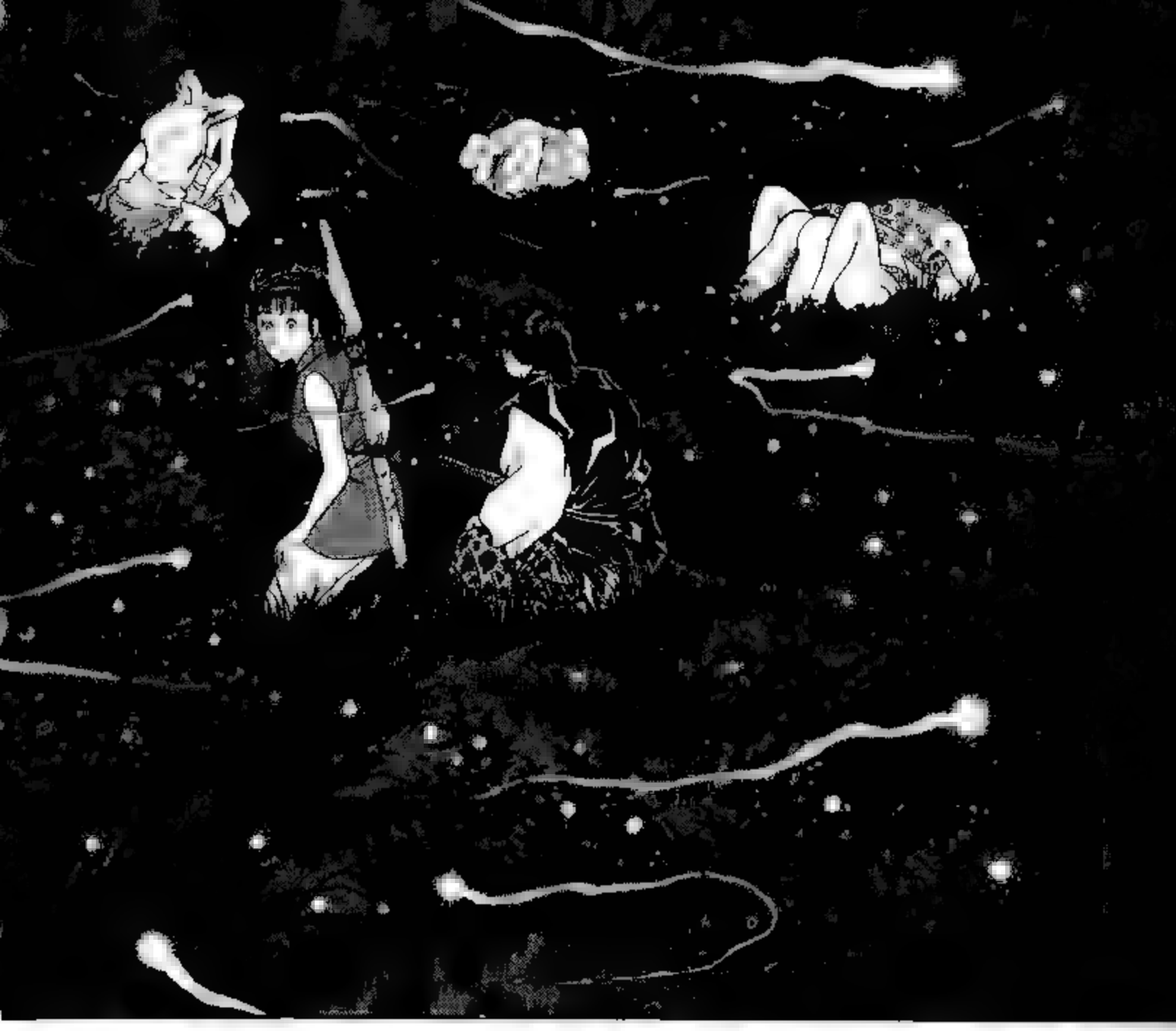

THIS IS BAD...
AZUMI...EH? SEEN FROM UP CLOSE, SHE'S A SURPRISINGLY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN...


.....


I SEE! THERE'S FIRE-FLIES!
THERE'S SO MANY!
DID THEY COME TO SEE THE FIREFLIES !?


HEY HEY...
YOU PLAN ON PEEPING, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE A WOMAN?
OR...
ARE YOU INVITING ME AS YOUR PARTNER FOR TONIGHT!?


HEY...
STOP LOOK-ING AROUND FOR A BIT..
SIT DOWN AL-READY!







ドッドッ
ドッドッ

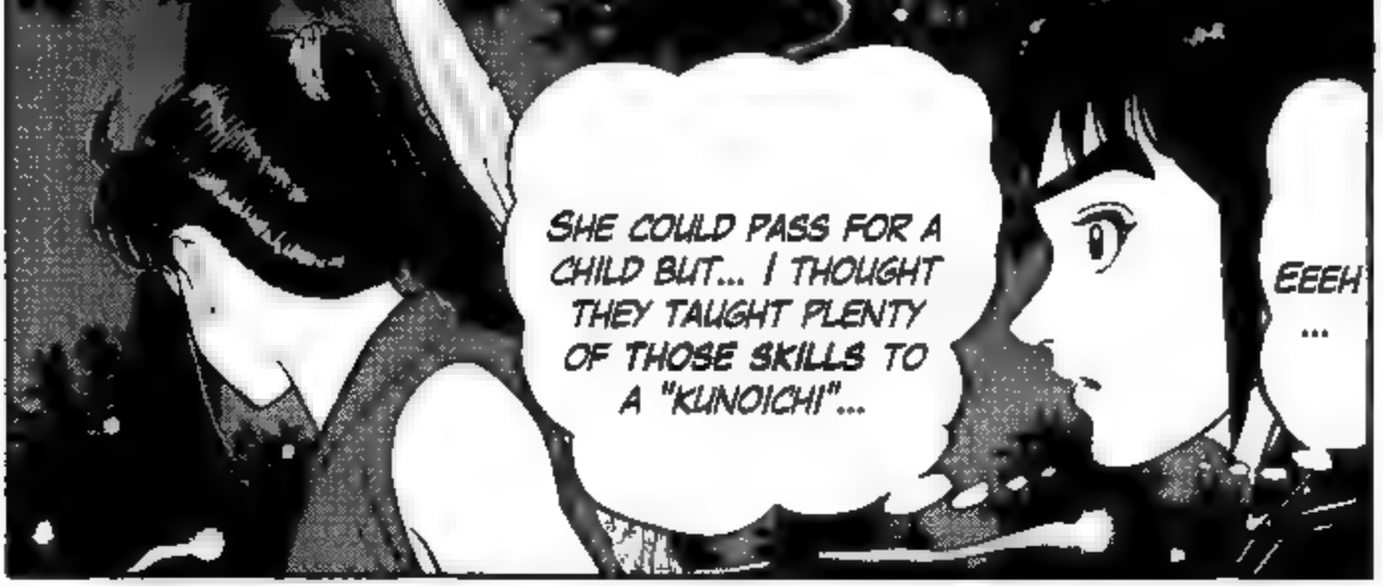
ドックン

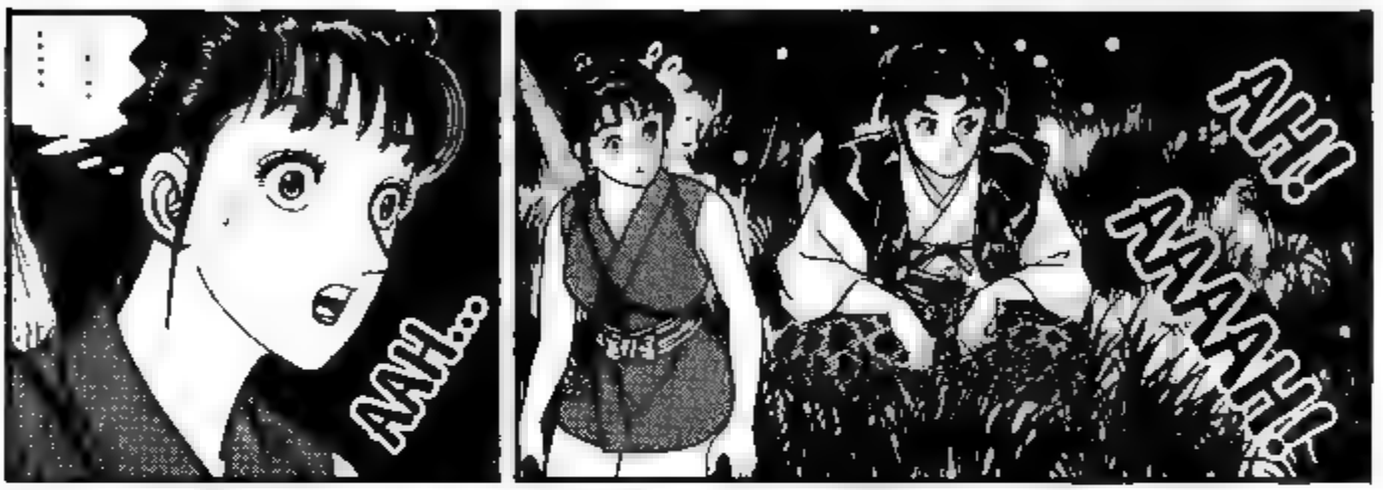

HUH!?
MEN AND WOMEN... DO THAT KIND OF STUFF!?


.....
WHAT'RE YOU SAYING? DON'T YOU KNOW ABOUT IT!?


YOU DID!?
AZUMI, HAVEN'T YOU DONE IT ALREADY?
THEN ...


.....
OF COURSE!


SHE COULD PASS FOR A CHILD BUT... I THOUGHT THEY TAUGHT PLENTY OF THOSE SKILLS TO A "KUNOICHI"...
EEEH ...


AAH...
AH! AAAAH!!


AH!
AH!
AH... AAAH...
WHY IS SHE MAKING THAT KIND OF VOICE!?


...IT FEELS GOOD...
IT SEEMS THAT LADY CAN'T CONTAIN HERSELF.
BECAUSE IT FEELS GOOD.
AAAH...


THAT'S NOT TRUE.
THEY'RE... PEOPLE WHO LOVE EACH OTHER, RIGHT?


IT'S ALMOST ALL CASUAL EN-COUNTERS... WELL, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WERE SECRETLY PLANNING IT FROM THE START, BUT...


UHM !?


.....


WITH CASUAL PEOPLE !?
T-THEY DO THAT STUFF...

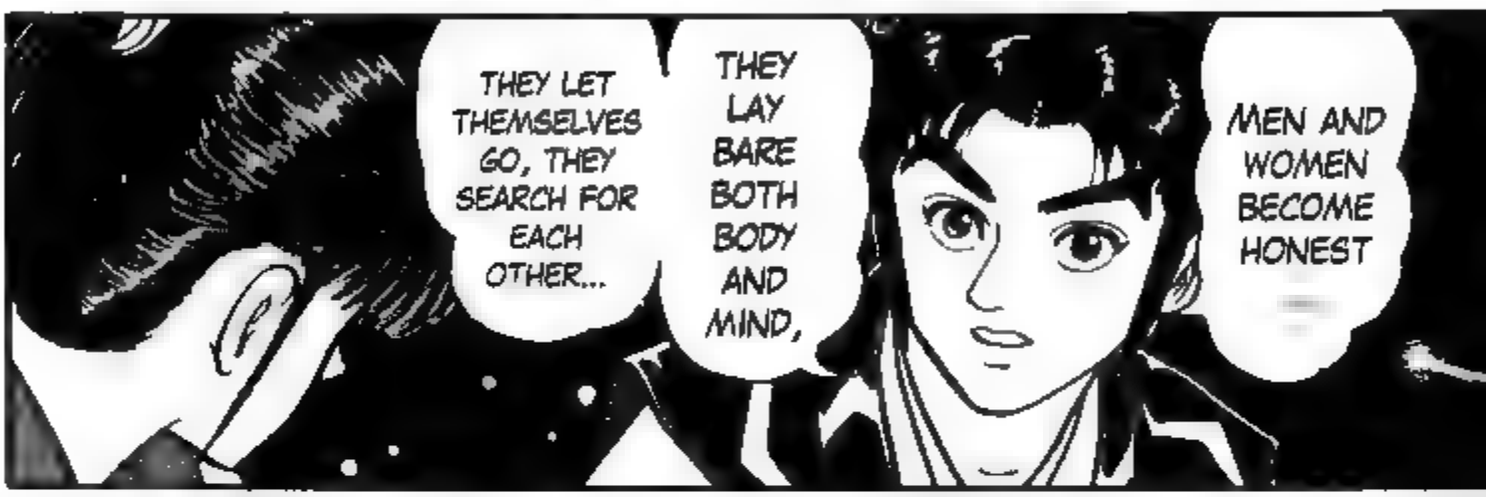

YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW ANYTHING...


IN THESE NIGHT FESTI-VALS...
ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN ON THESE DREAMY NIGHTS...
EVEN IF IT'S SINFUL OR PROHIBITED,
THEY SAY THAT ON THESE NIGHTS THE GODS CLOSE THEIR EYES...




DOING THAT SORT OF THING... EVEN IF THEY DON'T LOVE EACH OTHER...
BUT...

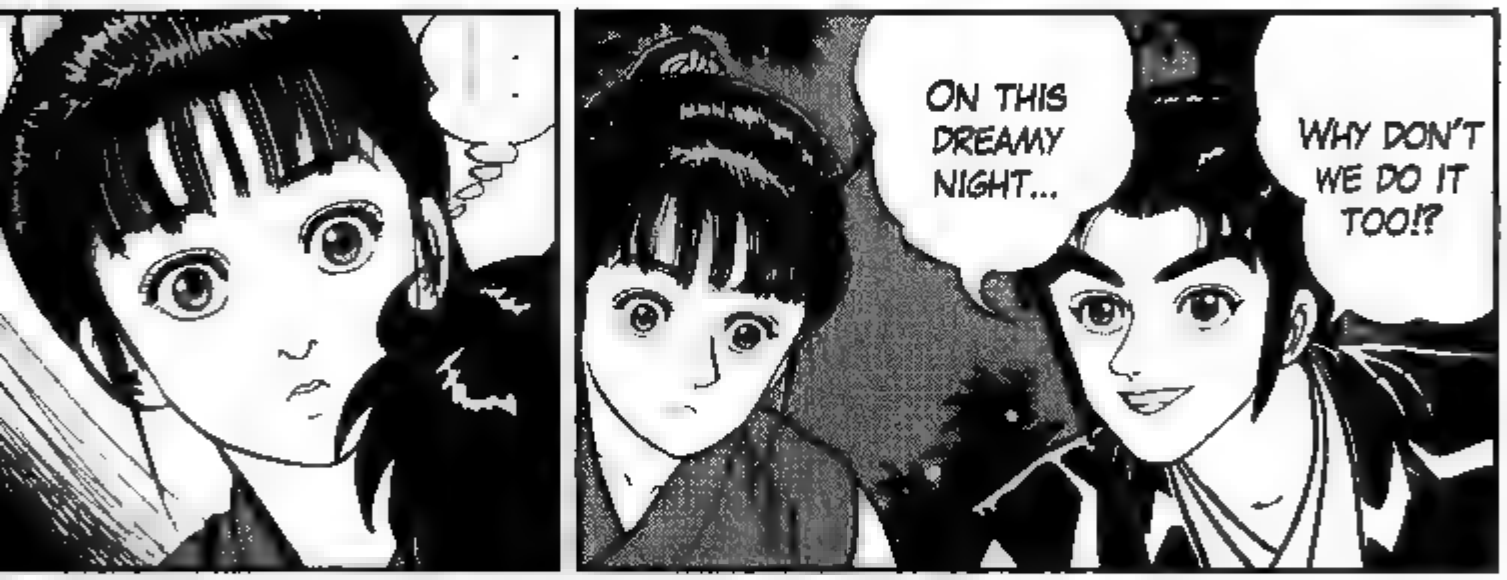

IT'S WAY BETTER THAN KILLING AND CUTTING EACH OTHER... RIGHT!?


THEY LET THEMSELVES GO, THEY SEARCH FOR EACH OTHER...
THEY LAY BARE BOTH BODY AND MIND,
MEN AND WOMEN BECOME HONEST


:


THAN TAKING EACH OTHERS' LIVES!?
DOESN'T THAT SOUND BETTER
PERSON-ALLY, I LOVE IT!


AHAH...
AHHHH...


ON THIS DREAMY NIGHT...
WHY DON'T WE DO IT TOO!?

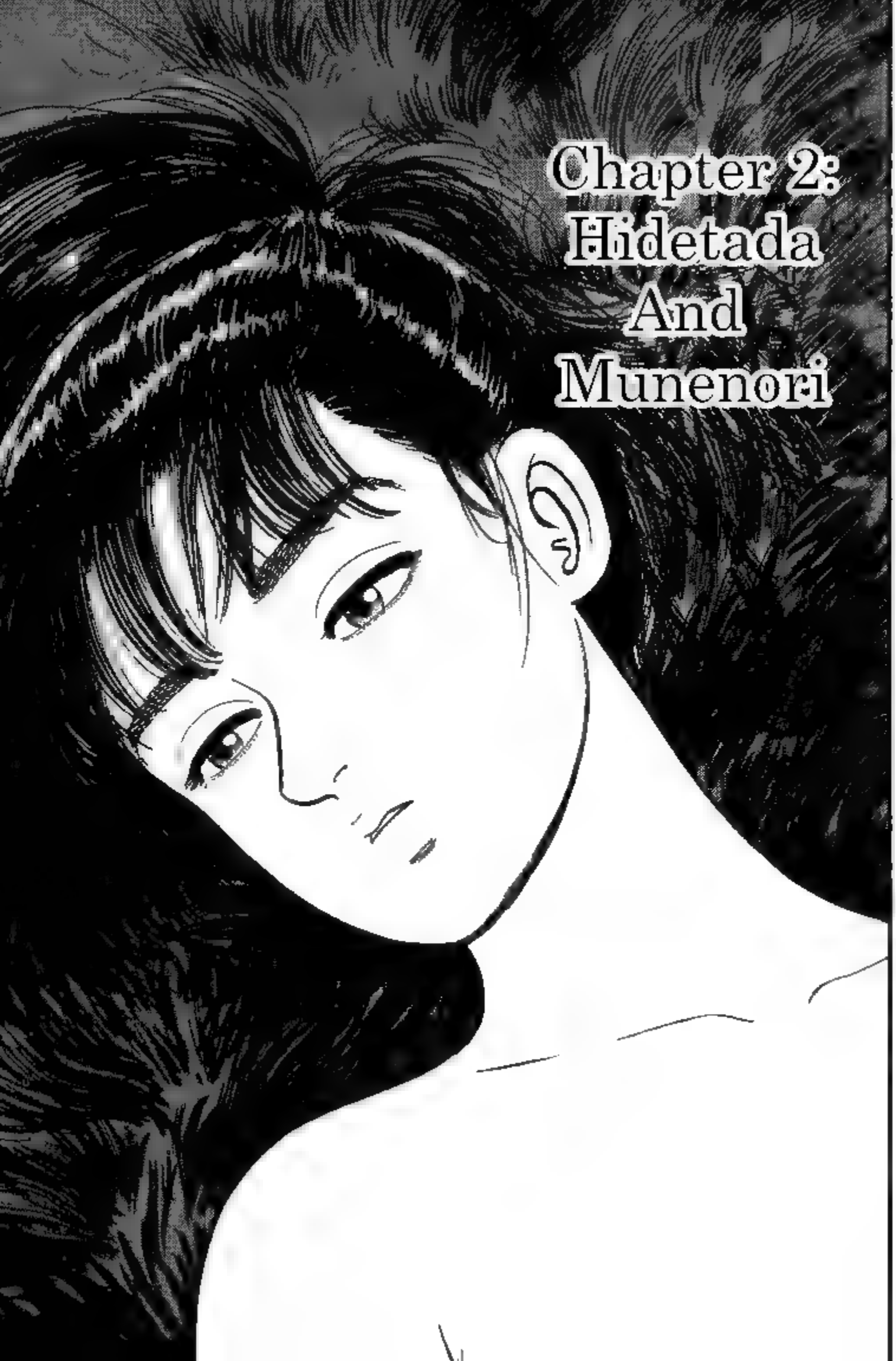

YOU'RE AT AN AGE WHERE YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF KNOWING ABOUT IT.
I'LL TEACH YOU!


AZUMI
CHAPTER 53
PRESENTED BY
GUREN NO HEYA KARA
AND HAPPY SCANS
TRANSLATED BY
GUREN
CLEANED BY
MIKJAK
PROOFREADING
BY SOFAKINGAC
TYPESETTING BY
KAZUHIKO


WHEN YOU KNOW ABOUT IT...MANY MISTERIES WILL HAVE THEIR ANSWERS...

30




Chapter 2:
Hidetada
And
Munenori


I HAD SOMEONE I LOVED...
UM ?!
I...
BUT, YOU DIDN'T LAY BARE, BODY AND MIND, LETTING YOURSELVES GO, SEARCHING FOR EACH OTHER...
YES ...

2


THAT MAN HAD NO GUTS.


.....
I DON'T WANT TO DO IT WITH SOMEONE I DON'T LOVE LIKE YOU!!


SHE'S A GOOD WOMAN ...
AZUMI.. EH?
.....

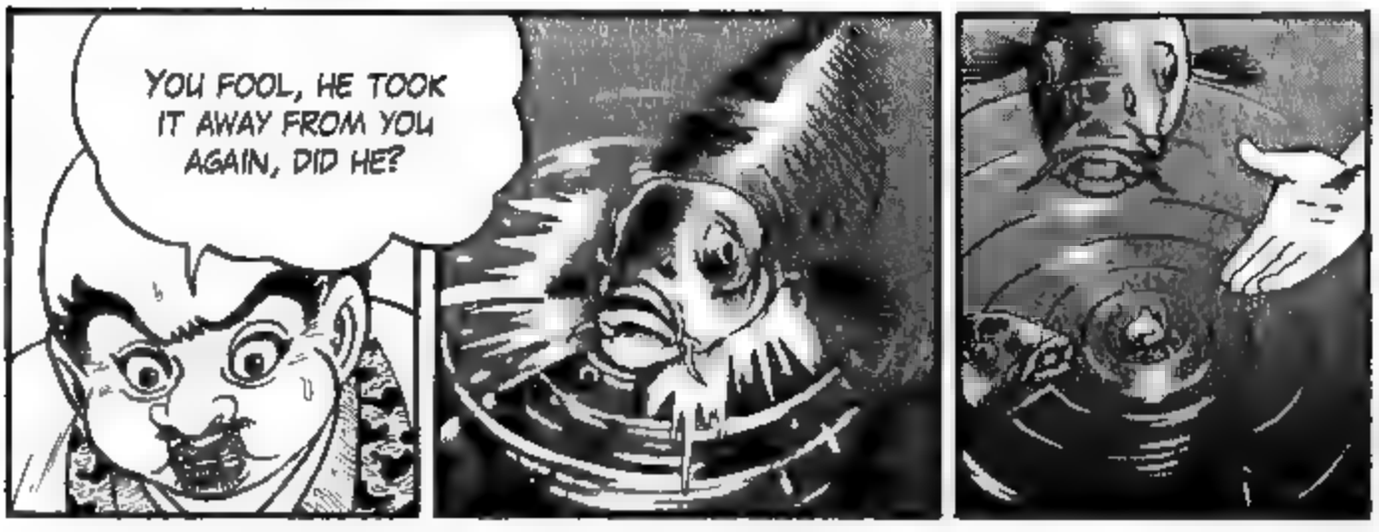

I'LL GO BACK
WHAT TO DO?
HOW TO REPORT THIS
DAMN.


THE SECOND SHŌGUN TOO, HIDETADA, WAS ON HIS WAY BACK FROM ŌSAKA TO EDO...

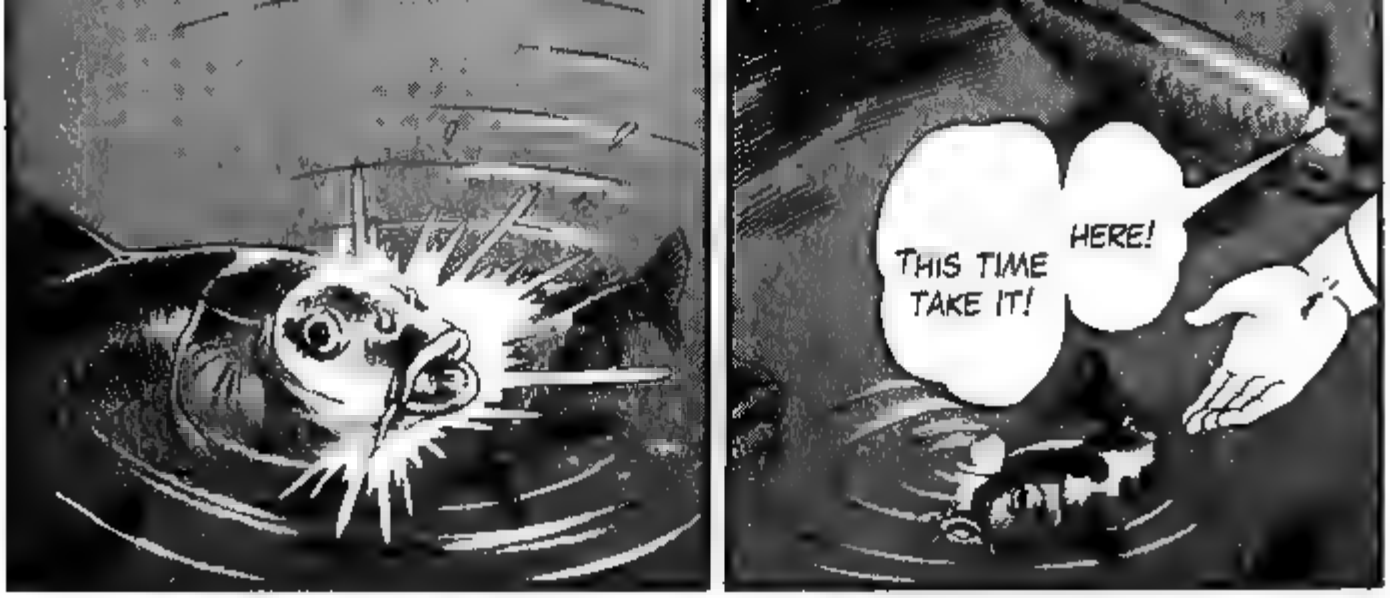

EVEN THE WINTER SIEGE OF ŌSAKA ENDED WITHOUT HIM ANY GREAT ACCOMPLISH-MENTS FROM HIM.
HIDETADA... DURING THE BATTLE OF SEKI-GAHARA FOUGHT HARDLY AGAINST THE SANADAS' TROOPS WHILE ON MARCH AND DIDN'T MAKE IT IN TIME FOR THE BATTLE.


FURTHER-MORE...HE WAS UNEXPECTEDLY ASSAULTED BY A RAID SQUAD... AND EXPOSED TO BLUNDERS IN AN INSTANT.
THAT'S WHY HE WAS IN HIGH SPIRITS BECAUSE HE WOULD HAVE OBTAINED SOME GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE SUMMER SIEGE!!...BUT, HE WAS GIVEN AN UNREA-SONABLE POSITION IN THE SIEGE BY IEYASU AND WITHDREW.

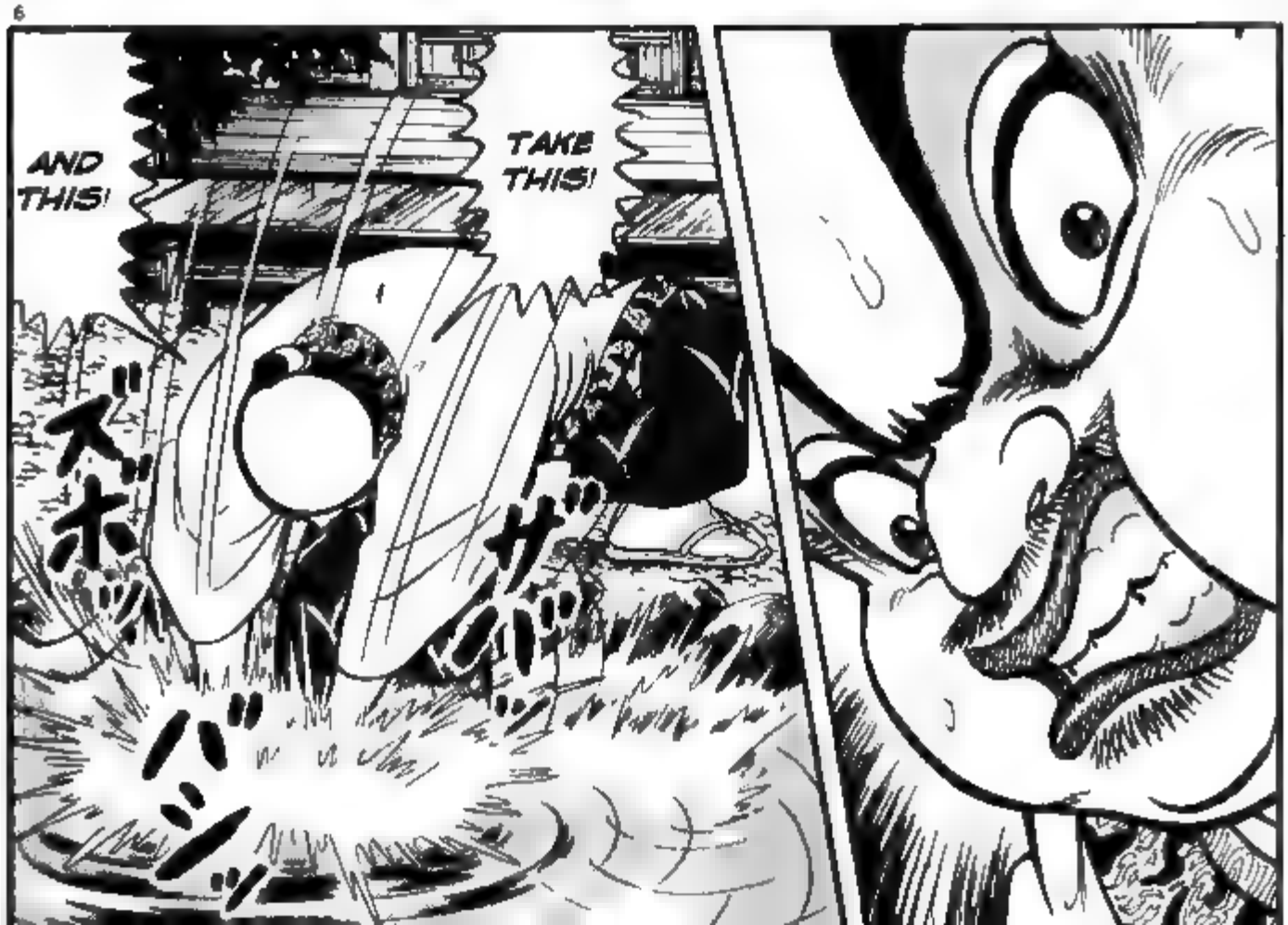

AFTER THE END OF THE SUMMER SIEGE, HIS FATHER, IEYASU, IN FRONT OF ALL THE RETAINERS, GAVE HIM JUST A LOOK OF WARN, WITHOUT SAYING EVEN A SINGLE WORD.


YOU FOOL, HE TOOK IT AWAY FROM YOU AGAIN, DID HE?


BUT I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU NO MORE!
YOU KEEP STEALING IT AWAY!
DAMN THIS ONE WITH-OUT SHAME!
AGAIN!?
HERE !!
YOU CAN'T OBTAIN FOOD THAT WAY...


HERE!
THIS TIME TAKE IT!


YOU STOLE IT AGAIN!
DAMN YOU!


AND THIS!
TAKE THIS!
ズボッ
ザバ
ハッ


Yagyu
Mune-
nori


Damn youuuu!! You think that having a huge body gets you the monopoly, eh!?


Ha
Ha
Ha


Yagyū Munenori was the shōgun's fencing instructor, but his father, Yagyū Sekishūsai didn't recognize him as successor for inheriting the Yagyū Shinkageryū.
Sekishūsai decreed the legitimate successor to the Yagyū Shinkageryū his grandson Hyōsuke (the son of his eldest son, Shinjirō).
Both Hidetada and Mune-nori...
Had both despised their fathers with all their being since their youth. It was this mutual loathing of their fathers that gave them a common point.
They possessed a friendship where they would speak of their true feelings when alone together.

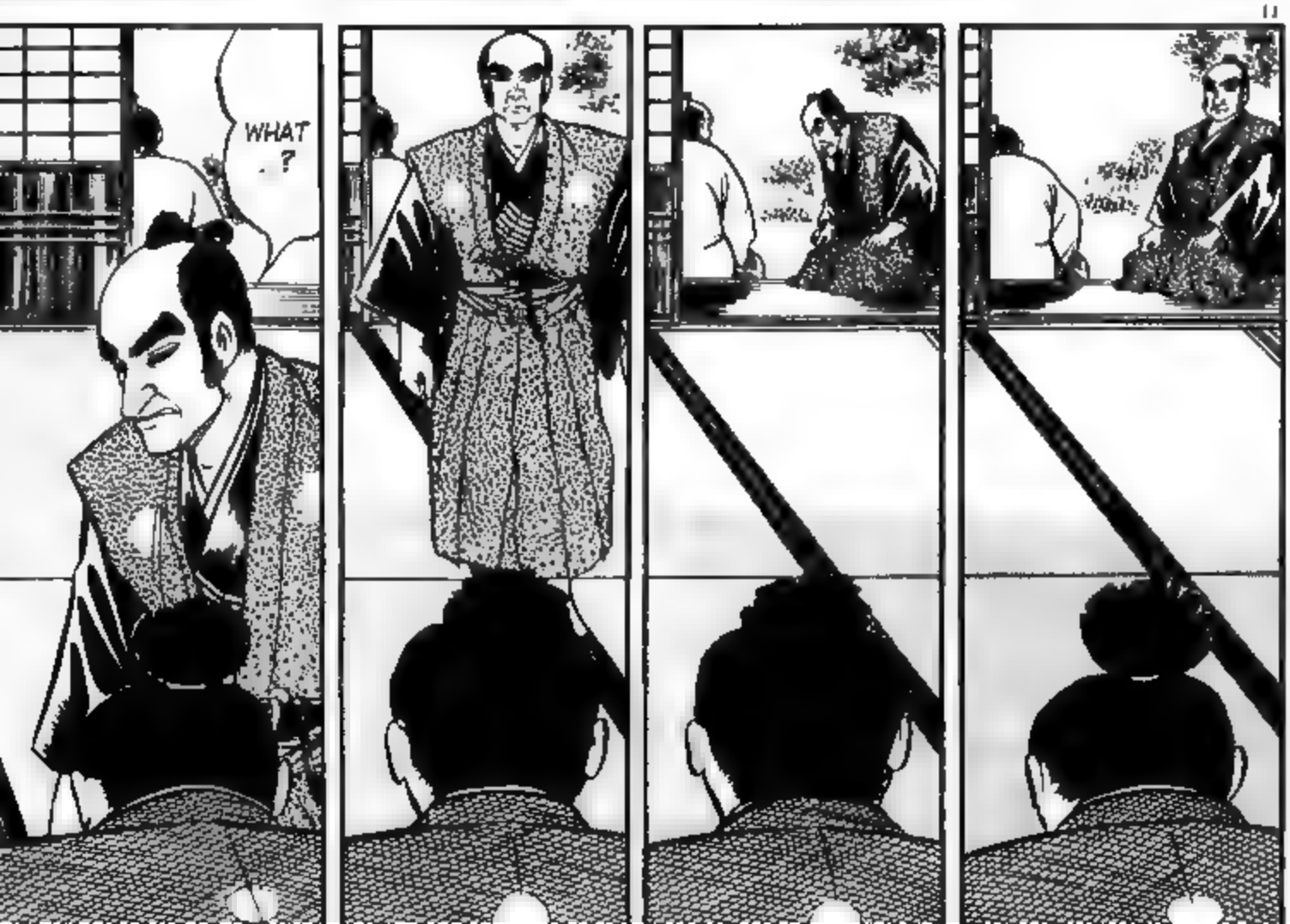

BUT..
I AM THE SHŌGUN OF THIS NATION...


NONE WILL RECOGNIZE ME!
UNTIL... THERE'S.. THAT...


I WONDER IF HE WILL LAST THE WINTER, OR...
HE DOES NOT HAVE MUCH LONGER.
THE ŌGOSHŌ IEYASU, IS, AT LEAST, OF ADVANCED AGE...


LET'S JUST HAVE A BIT OF PATIENCE...


PFT
THAT THING IS A TRUE MONSTER! HE COULD EVEN LIVE TO A HUNDRED!


WHAT ?


It seems that the group of assassins that Obata Gessai raised has eliminated Ogata and his men...they appear to possess great skill!.
A report from Kazuma has arrived!
Regarding that, it appears he has not yet taken the measure of their full numbers!
How many are they?
12
To Sunpu, eh...?
We think he is journeying to Sunpu where Tenkai-dono resides.
After we severed contacts with Tenkai-dono...Obata Gessai is now on the highway...
It seems there's only one girl with him who is taking care of nursing his body.








DON'T WORRY. IT'S SEPAR-ATED
EH?! MEN AND WOMEN TOGE-THER!?
IT WAS A GOOD BATH, AZUMI. GO IN
THEN I'LL HEAD RIGHT IN!
EEH
WOMEN GO IN FROM THIS SIDE?
SO DAMP! AND NOBODY'S HERE!


HEHEHEE!


AHHH.






PHEW

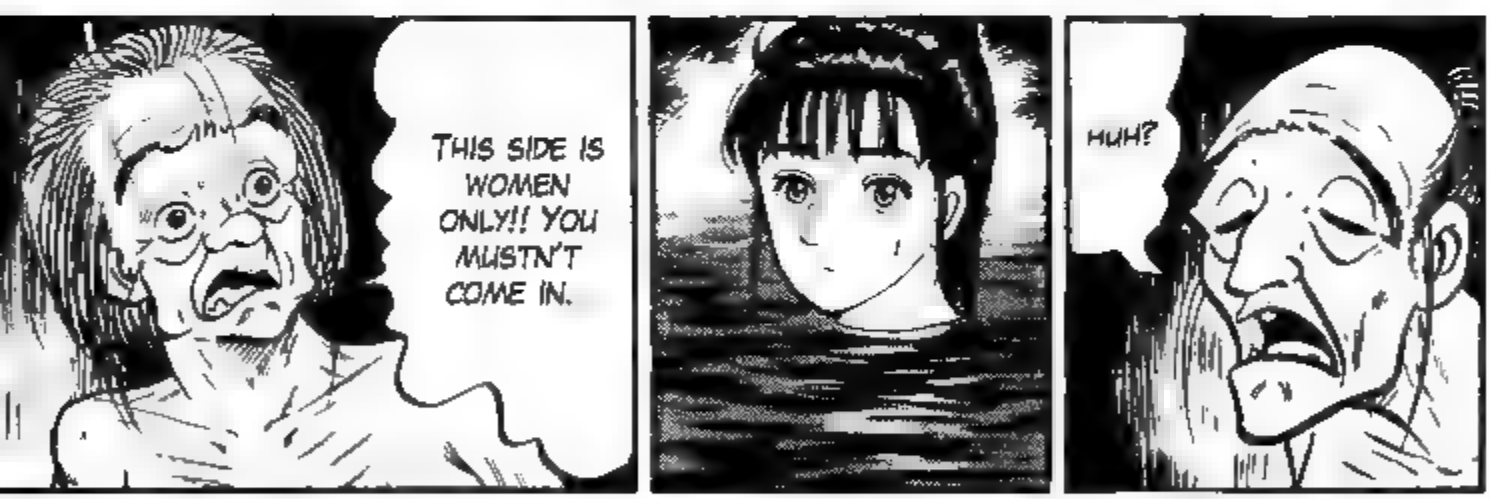



FUAAH!! WHAT A NICE FEELING!!
SUNA...


PARDON ME FOR INTRUD-ING!
ARE YOU ALONE, GIRL?
OHH!
PLEASE ...




MEN GO IN FROM THAT SIDE!
WHAT?
LEAVE ME ALONE?
DEAR, WHY DID YOU


THIS SIDE IS WOMEN ONLY!! YOU MUSTN'T COME IN.
HUH?


GO IN THE OTHER SIDE BY YOURSELF!
LOOK, THERE'S A YOUNG GIRL!
WILL YOU WASH ME?


DON'T MIND ME
PLEASE
AH.


I REALLY AM SORRY.
IT CAN'T BE HELPED
I'M OLD .


HEY, SIT HERE..


MEN AND WOMEN LAY BARE BOTH BODY AND MIND,
LETTING THEMSELVES GO AND SEARCHING FOR ONE ANOTHER.
ISN'T IT SO MUCH GREATER THAN KILLING ONE ANOTHER !?

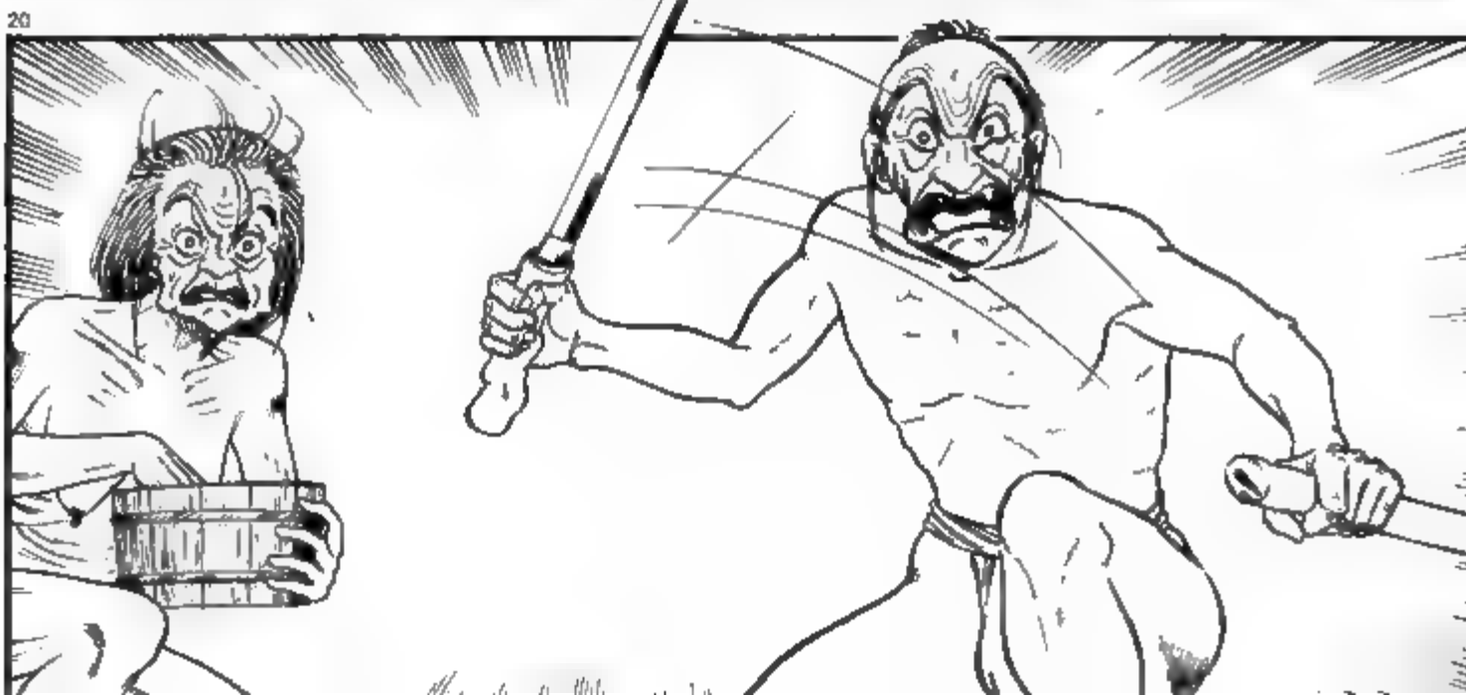



.....












バシャー


YOU WON'T ESCAPE!
ギャリ
ギャリ
ギャリ!!

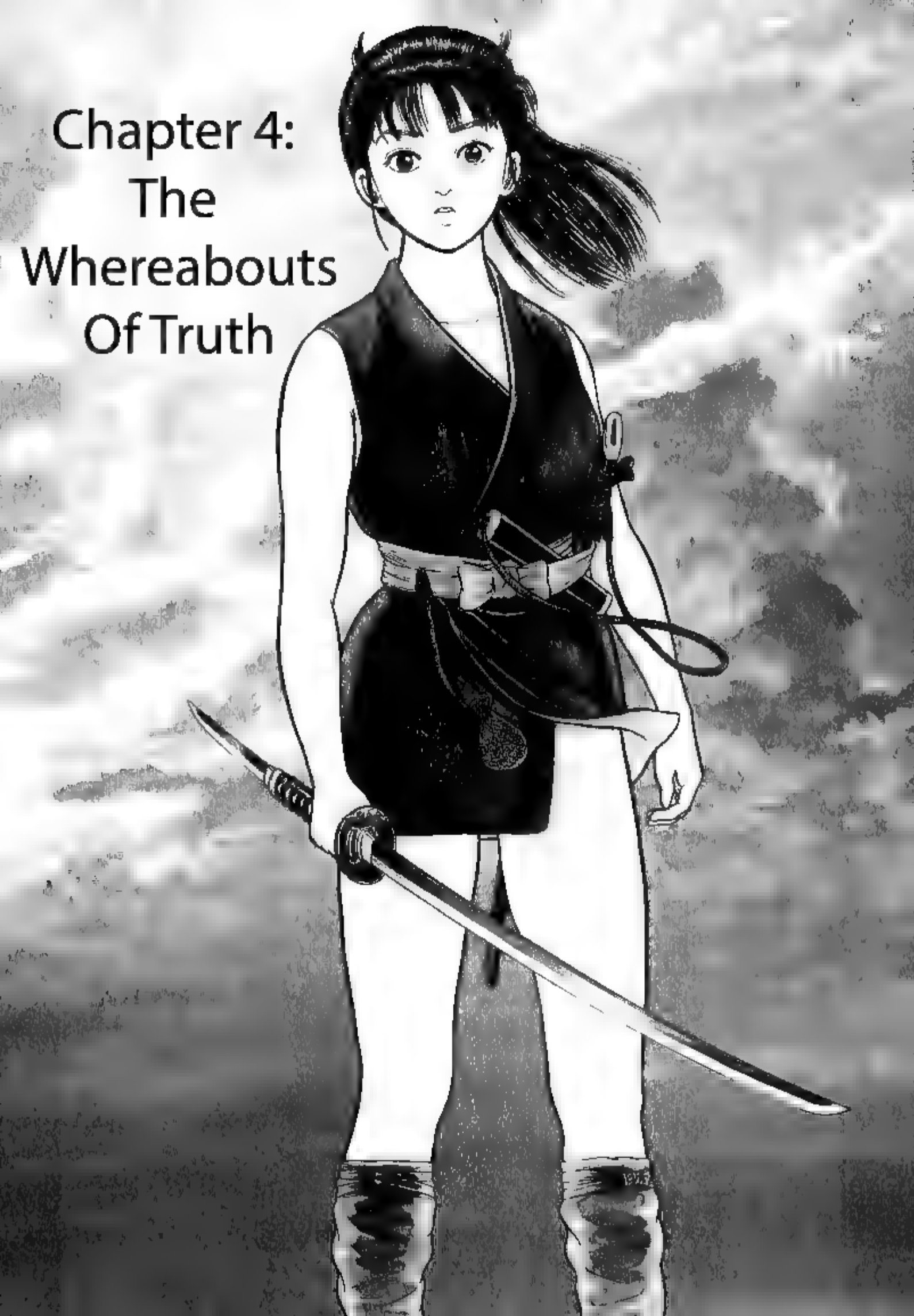


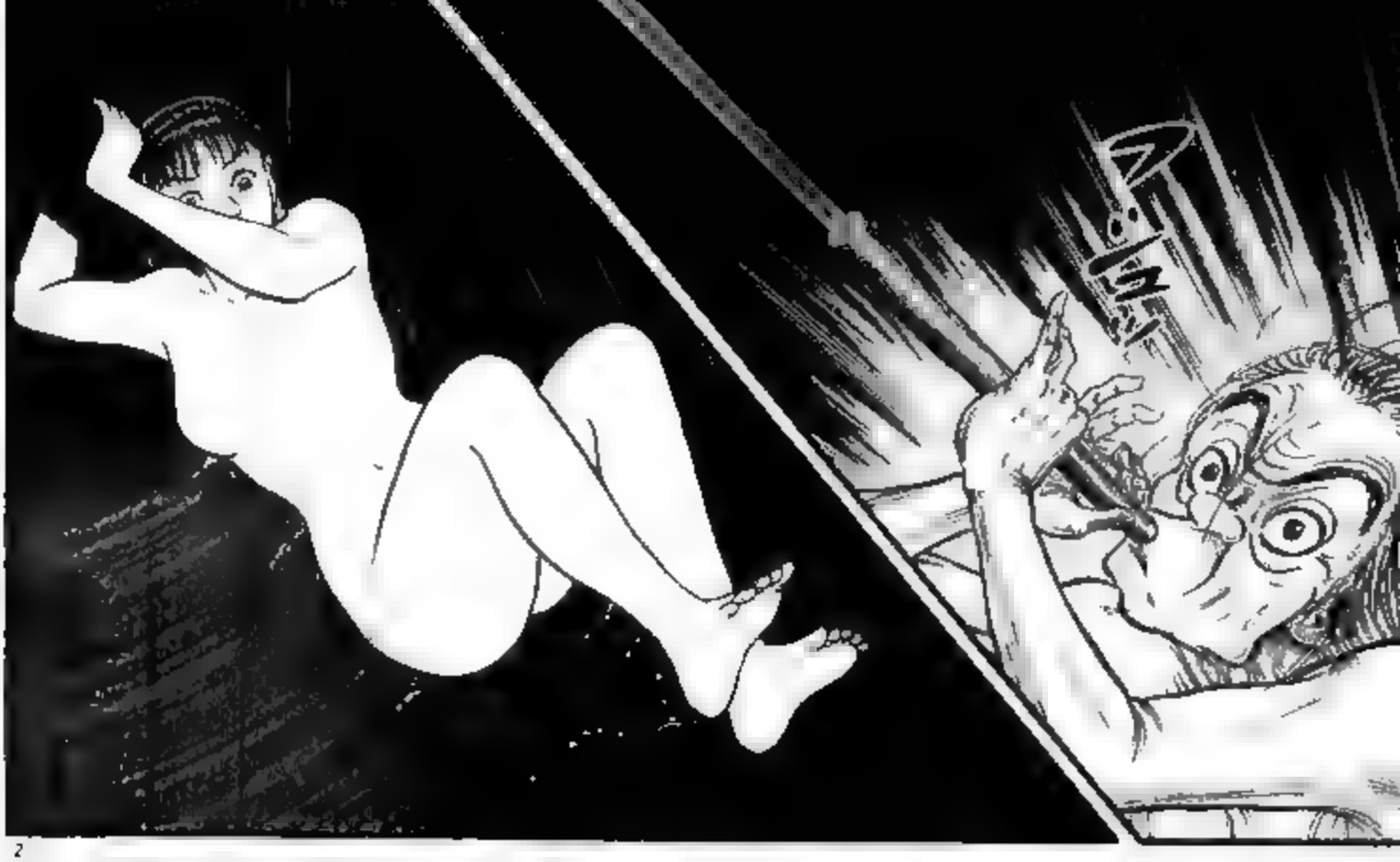



NOW! KILL HER WITH A POISONED DART!!!



Chapter 4: The Whereabouts Of Truth





2




KILL HEEER!
3


D-DAMN YOOOU!
GRAMPA

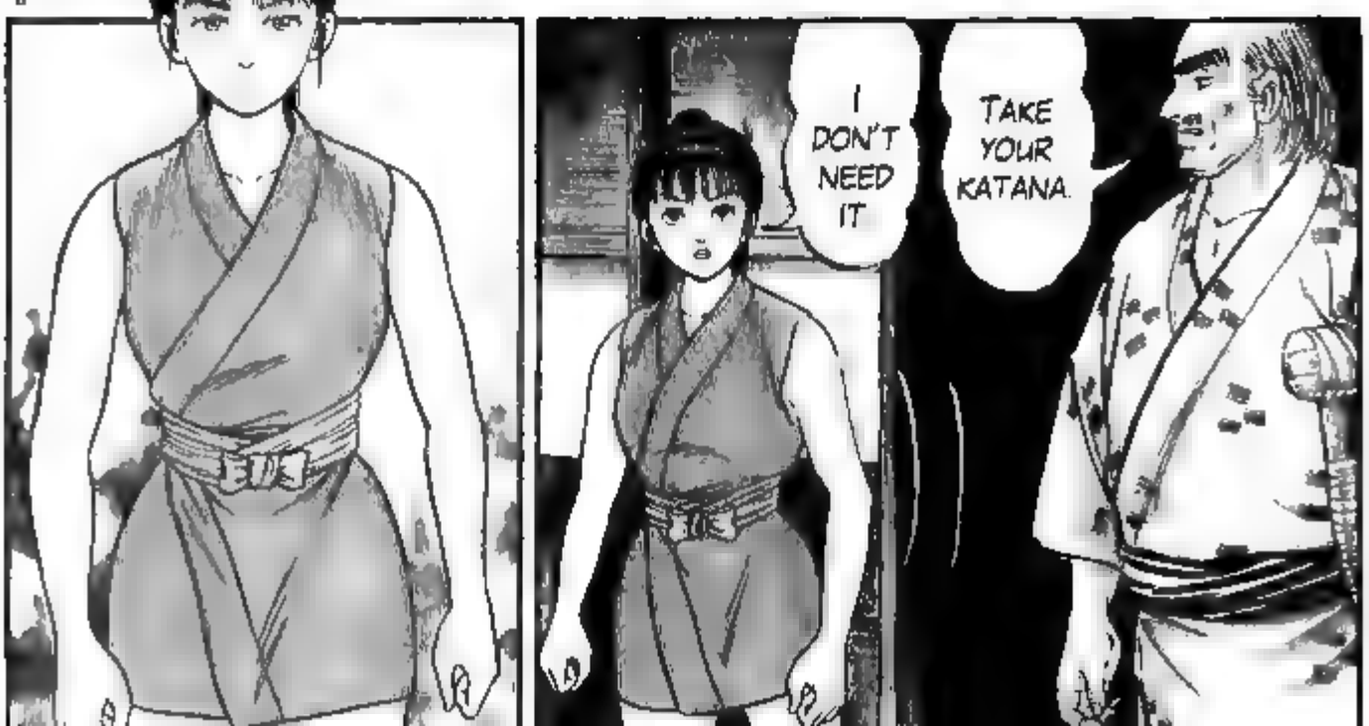

Phew...
HE'S SAFE!
.....


IT WAS TWO AMAZING OLD FOLKS..
MORE-OVER...
SHINOBI.
YES...
WERE YOU ATTACKED BY AN ENEMY...?
.....


THEY'RE HERE..
LIKE THAT COULD ATTACK...
TO THINK EVEN OLD FOLKS




HYA!!!


I DON'T NEED IT
TAKE YOUR KATANA.


IT'S USELESS. YOU CANNOT KILL ME.
KILL HEEER!
SHE...!
SHE VAN-ISHED!


TELL ME WHO ORDERED YOU TO DO THIS!
MORE IMPOR-TANTLY


GIVE UP AND GO AWAY.
AAAH!


WHO ORDERED THIS!?


.....
.....


ブズ
ズ"


EEEK!
CARRY OUT OUR MISSION ...
HOW... REGRETTABLE... THAT WE COULD NOT...
.....


RIGHT!?
WE RECEIVED A FINAL UNEXP-ECTED MISSION...


WHILE WE WERE THINKING TO WAIT FOR A USELESS DEATH...
WE'VE ALREADY... BECOME DECREPIT WITH OLD AGE...



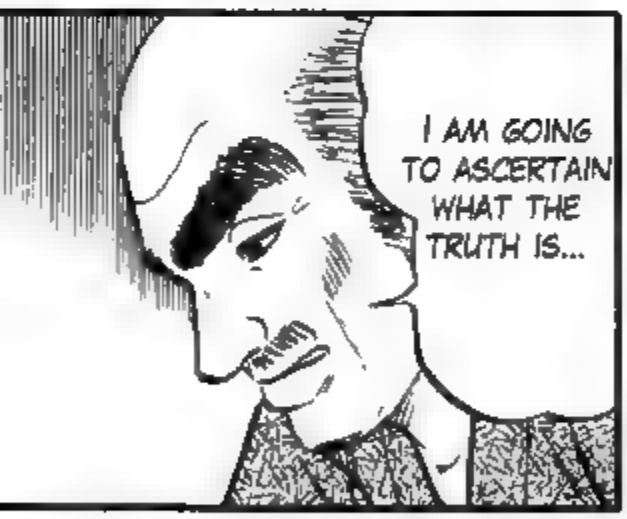

DREAM!
TO DIE IN SERVICE WAS OUR LONG AND CHER-ISHED...

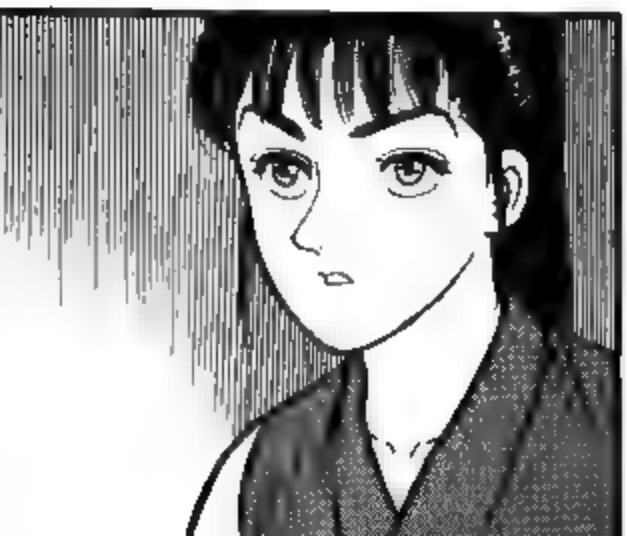

.... AND THEN ...


...

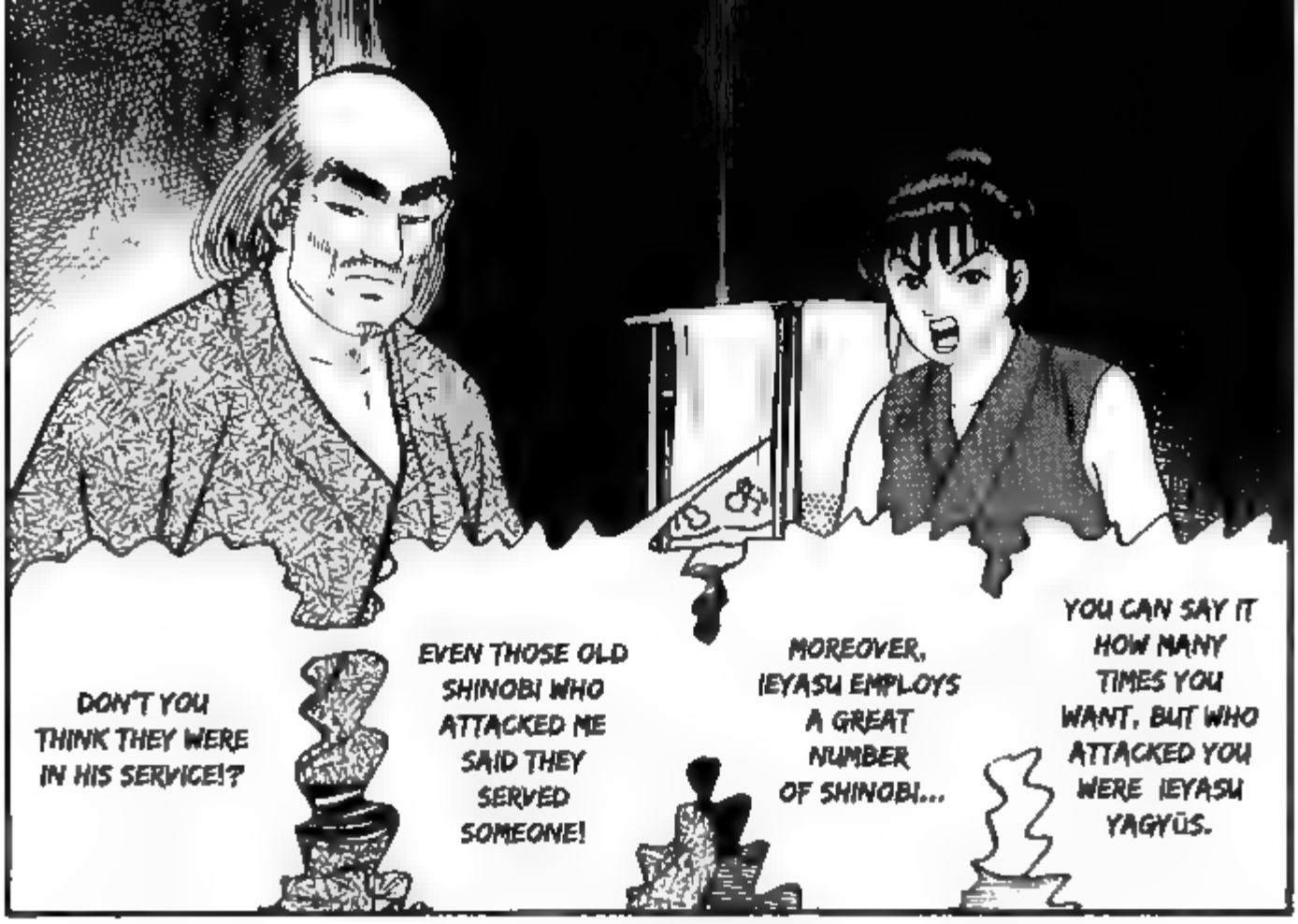

.....

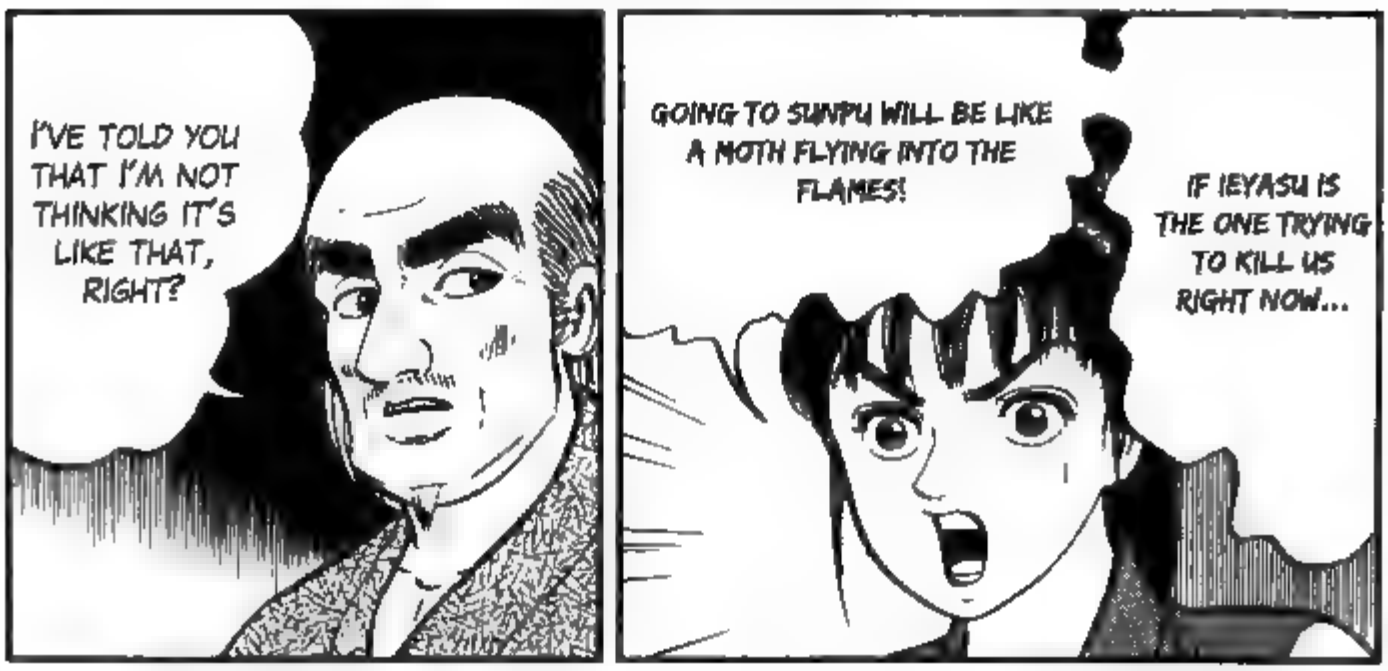

THEY REACHED SUNPU ...


I AM GOING TO ASCERTAIN WHAT THE TRUTH IS...




ARE YOU GOING TO MEET WITH IEYASU?
GRAMPA ...
YOU SAY THAT TOMORROW YOU'LL GO TO SUNPU CASTLE...

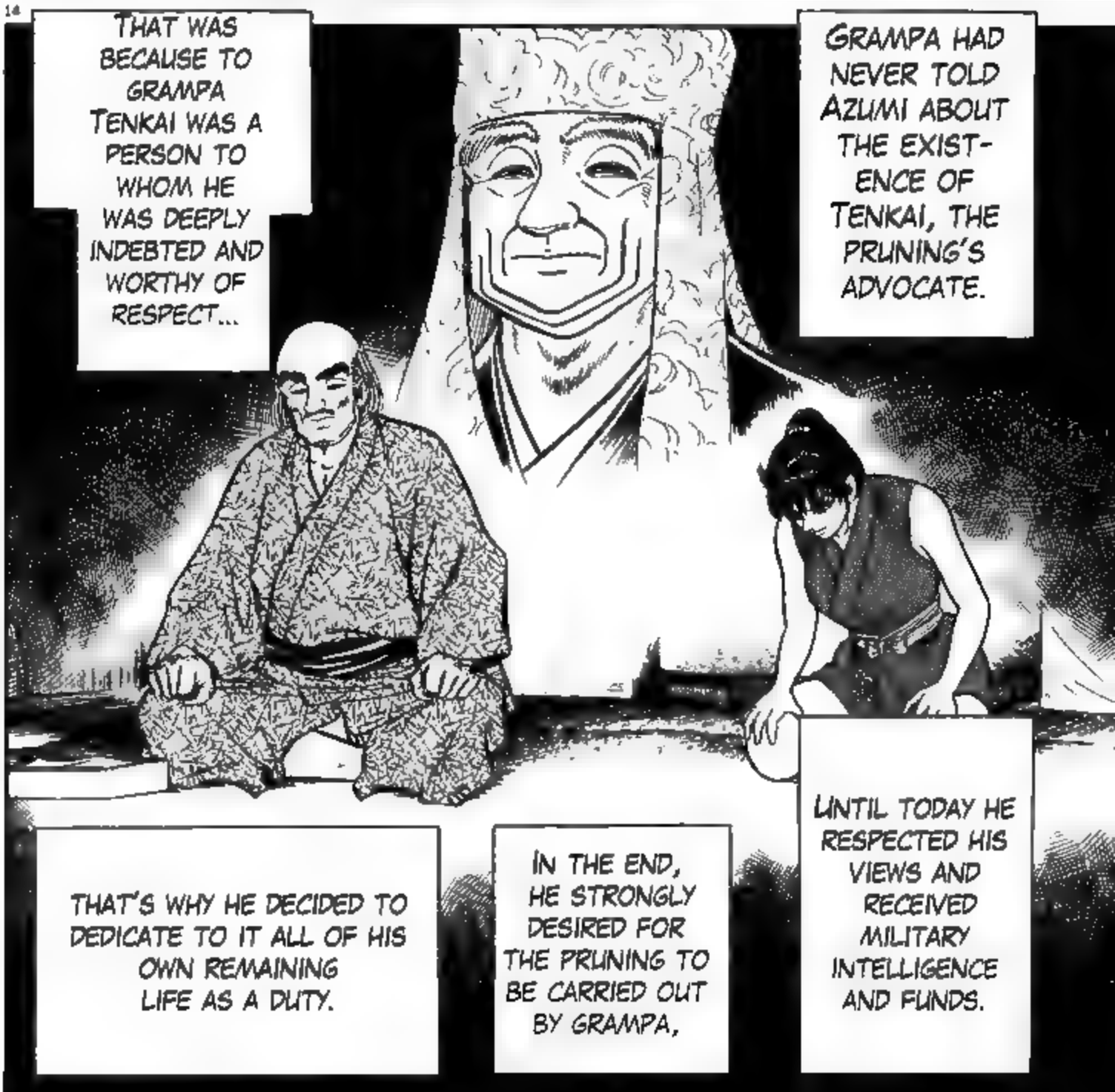

DON'T YOU THINK THEY WERE IN HIS SERVICE!?
EVEN THOSE OLD SHINOBI WHO ATTACKED ME SAID THEY SERVED SOMEONE!
MOREOVER, IEYASU EMPLOYS A GREAT NUMBER OF SHINOBI...
YOU CAN SAY IT HOW MANY TIMES YOU WANT, BUT WHO ATTACKED YOU WERE IEYASU YAGYÜS.


I'VE TOLD YOU THAT I'M NOT THINKING IT'S LIKE THAT, RIGHT?
GOING TO SUNPU WILL BE LIKE A MOTH FLYING INTO THE FLAMES!
IF IEYASU IS THE ONE TRYING TO KILL US RIGHT NOW...


.....
THAT IS WHY I AM GOING TO PROBE THE TRUTH.
IT MIGHT BE LIKE THAT!!!


USED US TO KILL THE CHIEF RETAINERS
WHO... TILL TO-DAY ...
IF IEY-ASU...
ALRIGHT, I UNDER-STAND.
BY DISPOSING OF US...
IF THIS TIME... IF HE'S THINKING OF COVERING IT UP...
OF TOYOTOMI WHO WERE HINDERING HIM...
WERE THEY FOR...
THEN...
TILL THIS DAY...
OUR.....
EVERYONE'S EFFORTS..
SUCH A MAN?!


.....
.....
I WILL KILL IEYASU, GRAMPA!!!
I WILL NEVER FORGIVE HIM!!!!!


THAT WAS BECAUSE TO GRAMPA TENKAI WAS A PERSON TO WHOM HE WAS DEEPLY INDEBTED AND WORTHY OF RESPECT...
GRAMPA HAD NEVER TOLD AZUMI ABOUT THE EXIST-ENCE OF TENKAI, THE PRUNING'S ADVOCATE.
THAT'S WHY HE DECIDED TO DEDICATE TO IT ALL OF HIS OWN REMAINING LIFE AS A DUTY.
IN THE END, HE STRONGLY DESIRED FOR THE PRUNING TO BE CARRIED OUT BY GRAMPA,
UNTIL TODAY HE RESPECTED HIS VIEWS AND RECEIVED MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND FUNDS.


I WON'T FORGIVE HIM...
WITHOUT KNOWING THAT, THE KILLINGS OF THE TOYOTOMI FACTION THAT AZUMI DID... THE PRUNING SHE COMMITED UNTIL TODAY...SHE THOUGHT IT TO BE AN ORDER FROM IEYASU.
YOU'RE GOING ALONE!?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!?
EH !?
YOU'LL WAIT HERE.
YOU WON'T ACCOMPANY ME TO THE CASTLE.
.....
YOU WILL NOT COME WITH ME!
YOU'LL END UP DYING, GRAMPA!
YOU ...
WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF IT'S LIKE I IMAGINED?!
THEN ...


I'LL BE ALL ALONE !!!!
IF YOU'LL END UP GETTING KILLED...WON'T I END UP GETTING ALL ALONE!?


IF YOU THINK OF MY AGE..
AZUMI ...

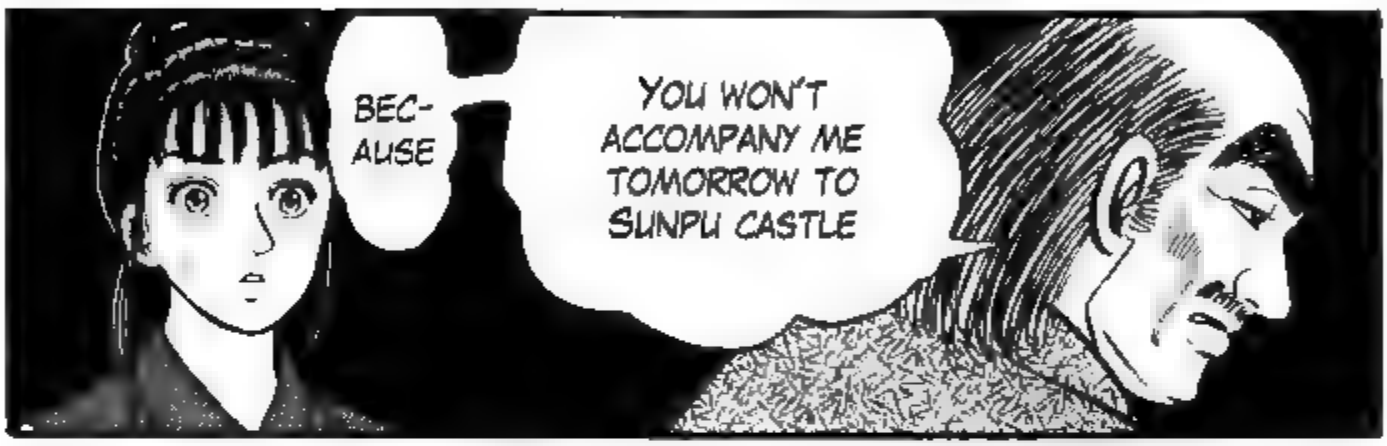

THE MOMENT WHEN YOU'LL BECOME ALONE WILL INEVITABLY COME.
ONE DAY, I'M GOING TO DIE BEFORE YOU...

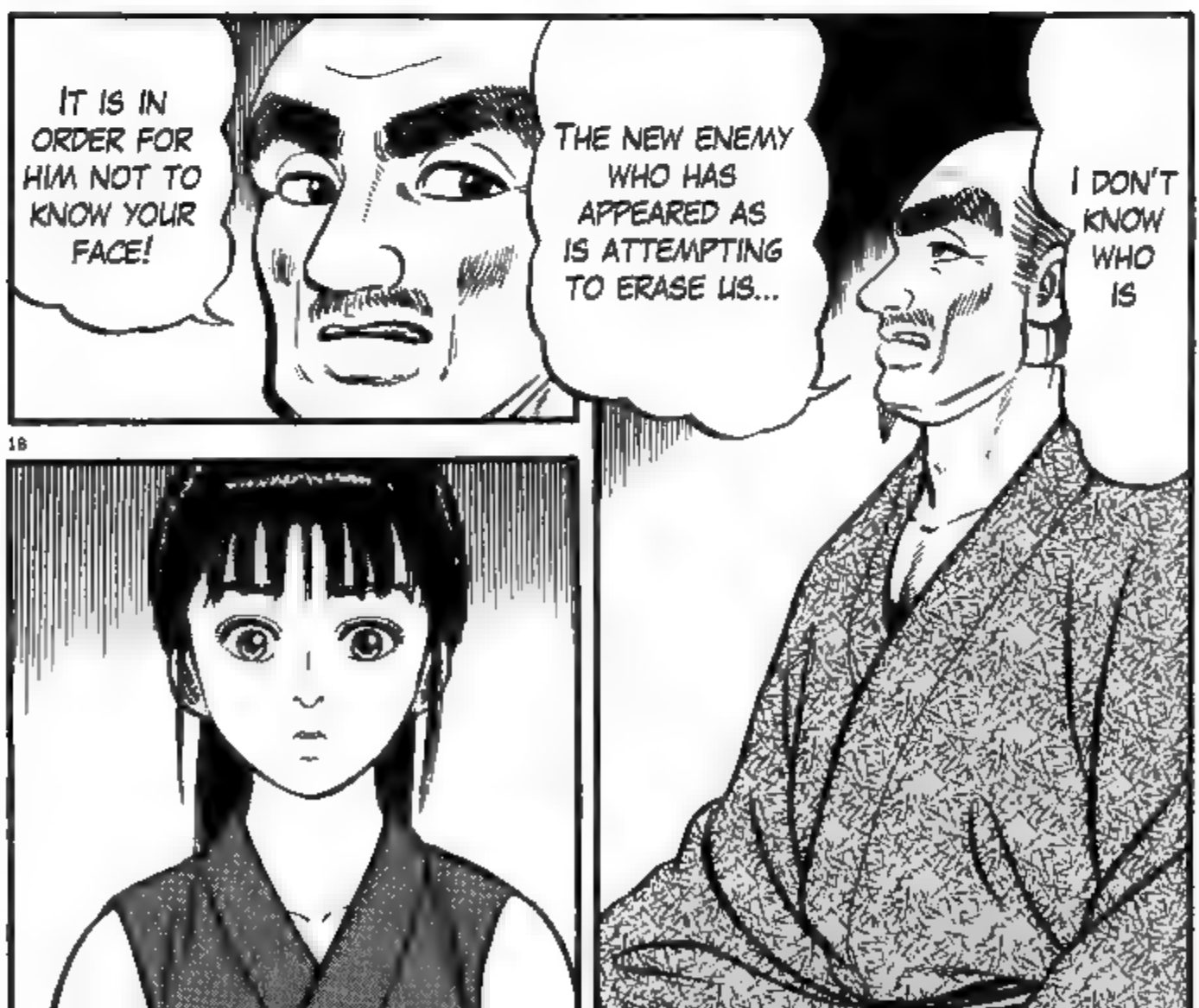

THERE'S NOT A DAY WHERE I DON'T THINK OF THAT MOMENT...


IN HERE ...
EH!?
.....
IS A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY I'VE SAVED UP FOR WHEN THAT TIME COMES...


THE REMEDIES FOR WHEN YOU RECEIVE A WOUND OR YOU'RE ILL...HOW TO SHARPEN A BLADE...
WHAT FISH, BEASTS AND FRUITS ARE EDIBLE...
AND SO ON...I TAUGHT YOU THE WAYS I KNOW TO GO ON LIVING...
AND THEN, THAT BUJUTSU THAT REACH A LEVEL YOU CAN BE PROUD OF IN THE WHOLE COUNTRY.


IF I DIE AND YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN...
YOU WILL ...
HAVE TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.


YOU WON'T ACCOMPANY ME TOMORROW TO SUNPU CASTLE
BECAUSE

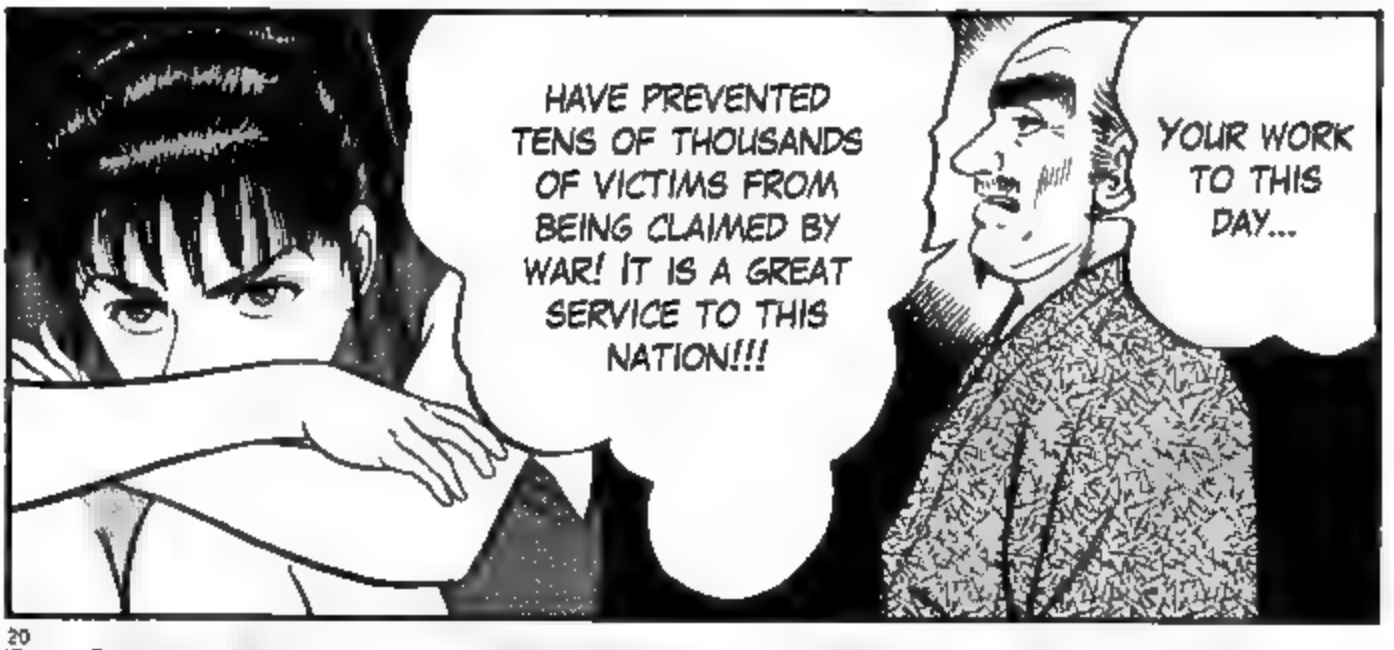

I DON'T KNOW WHO IS
THE NEW ENEMY WHO HAS APPEARED AS IS ATTEMPTING TO ERASE US...
IT IS IN ORDER FOR HIM NOT TO KNOW YOUR FACE!


UNDER-STOOD?
EVEN AFTER YOU'RE ALONE, THE ENEMY WILL AIM FOR YOUR LIFE.
IF HE ENDS UP KNOW-ING YOU,

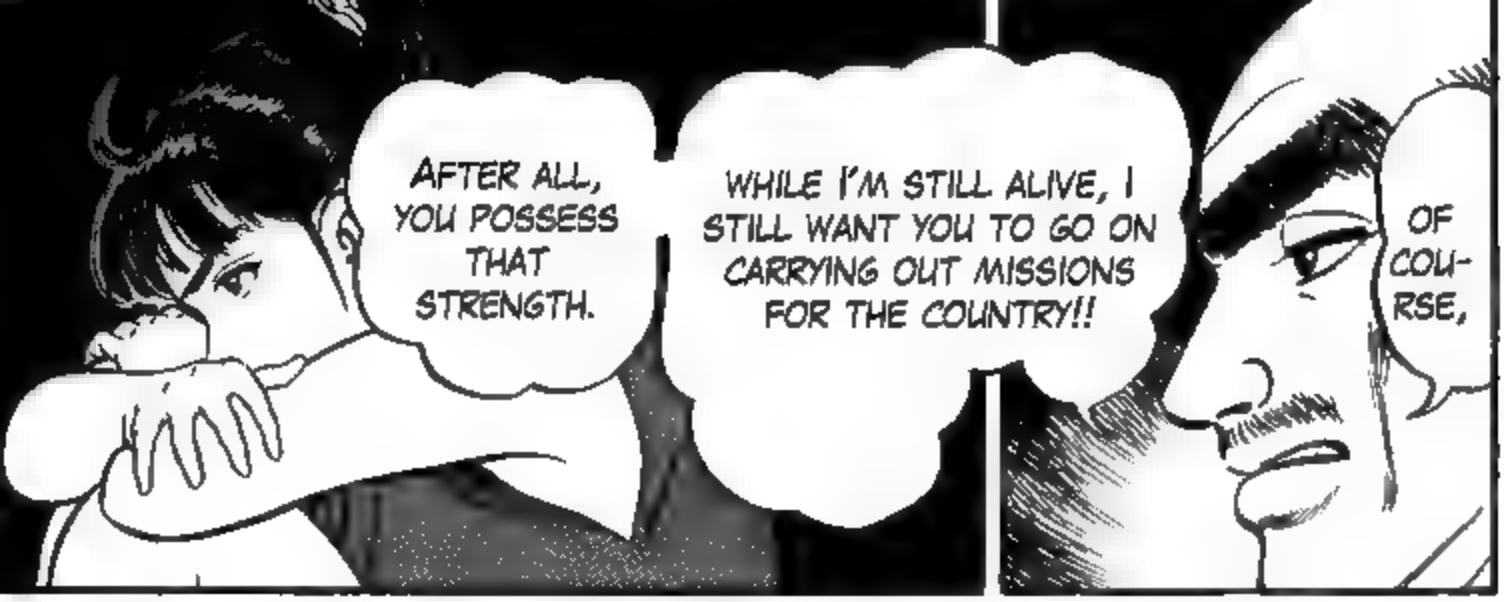

NOT A SINGLE DAY THAT YOU DON'T THINK...
ABOUT THE MOMENT WHEN I'LL BECOME ALONE!?
YOU SAID THAT ...


COR-RECT.
.....


DOES IT MEAN I COULD LIVE AS I LIKE FROM THAT POINT ON!?
IF I REMAIN ALONE...


HAVE PREVENTED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF VICTIMS FROM BEING CLAIMED BY WAR! IT IS A GREAT SERVICE TO THIS NATION!!!
YOUR WORK TO THIS DAY...


YOU HAD TO CARRY OUT TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD!
IT CAN BE SAID YOU'VE ALREADY DONE ENOUGH WITH THE DUTY...


AFTER ALL, YOU POSSESS THAT STRENGTH.
WHILE I'M STILL ALIVE, I STILL WANT YOU TO GO ON CARRYING OUT MISSIONS FOR THE COUNTRY!!
OF COU-RSE,


YOU CAN LIVE LIKE YOU WANT TO!!
THERE-AFTER,


WHEN YOU ARE ON YOUR OWN...
BUT ...


WHAT THE HEL ARE YOU SAYING!?!!?


HM!?
.....




I.....
I DON'T ...!


.....
.....
.....


END UP ON MY OWN...
I DON'T WANNA...


WHAT ...?
THOUGHT ABOUT THAT!
I'VE NEVER

ALL ALONE!
ENDING UP...


IS THAT...?
THE HELL...
THE HELL IS THAT ?!
THE HELL IS THAT ?!


WH...
IF YOU WERE TO DIE, I COULDN'T GO ON LIVING!


A... AZUMI...
YOU'RE SO STUPIIID!

AZUMI...

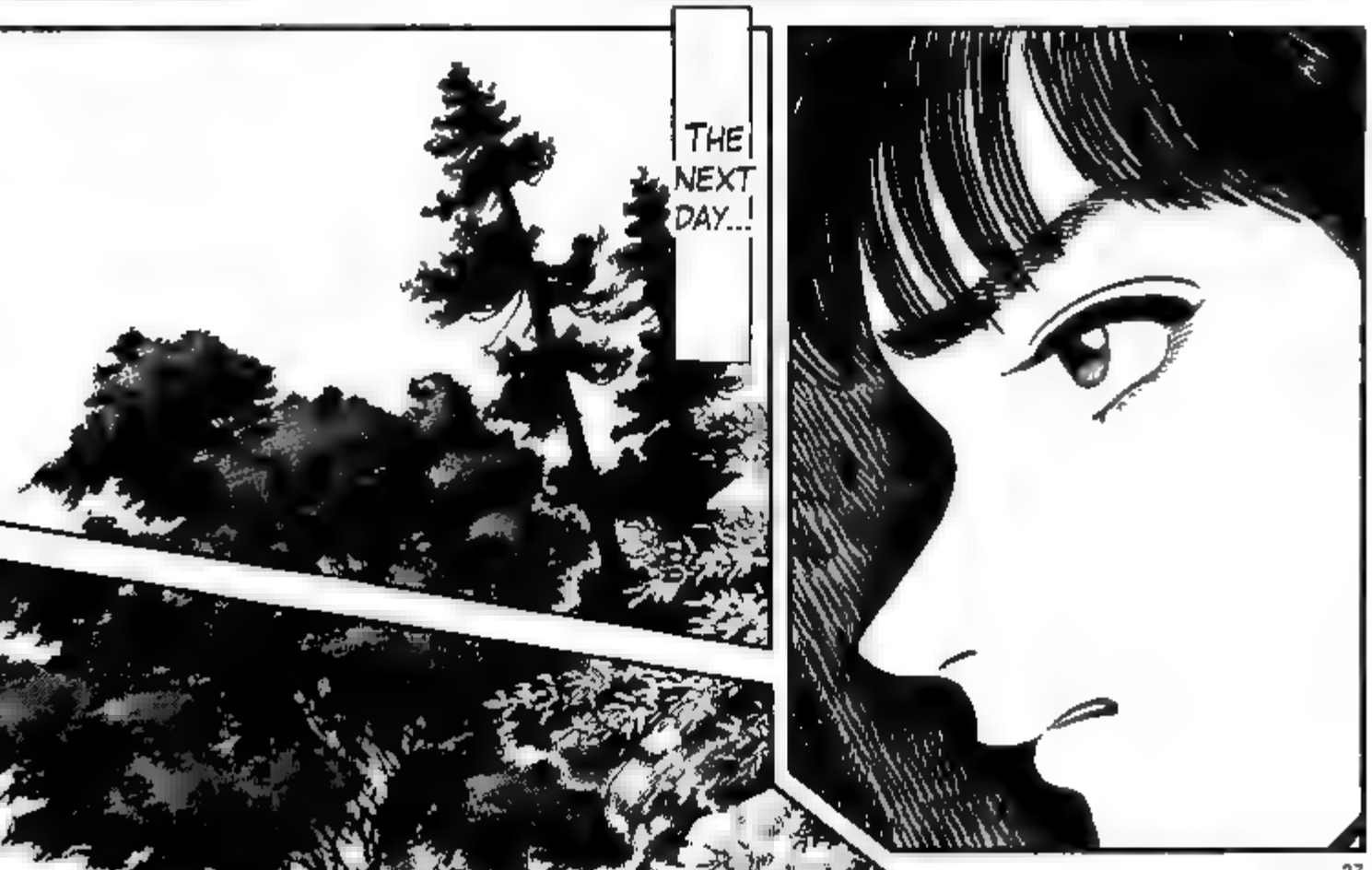
!!

gaaa


.....
.....
ス
.....
DID SHE FALL ASLEEP WHILE CRYING?


.....
UNEXP-ECTED...
AND GOT OVER IT, COULD SOB SO MUCH LIKE SHE GOT BACK TO THE TIME WHEN SHE WAS A CHILD...
TO THINK THAT AZUMI.. WHO ENDURED THE DEATHS OF HER COMRADES...




THE NEXT DAY...


ARE WE CLEAR?! YOU MUST WAIT!








* 1 KOKU IS ABOUT 2 HOURS.
I SHOULD BE BACK IN LESS THAN ONE KOKU.*
HOW LONG SHOULD I WAIT?




ドックン
ドックン


SEE YOU.






WHY DO I HAVE SUCH A BAD PREMONITION...?
ドクン


……
ドクン
ドクン
ドクン

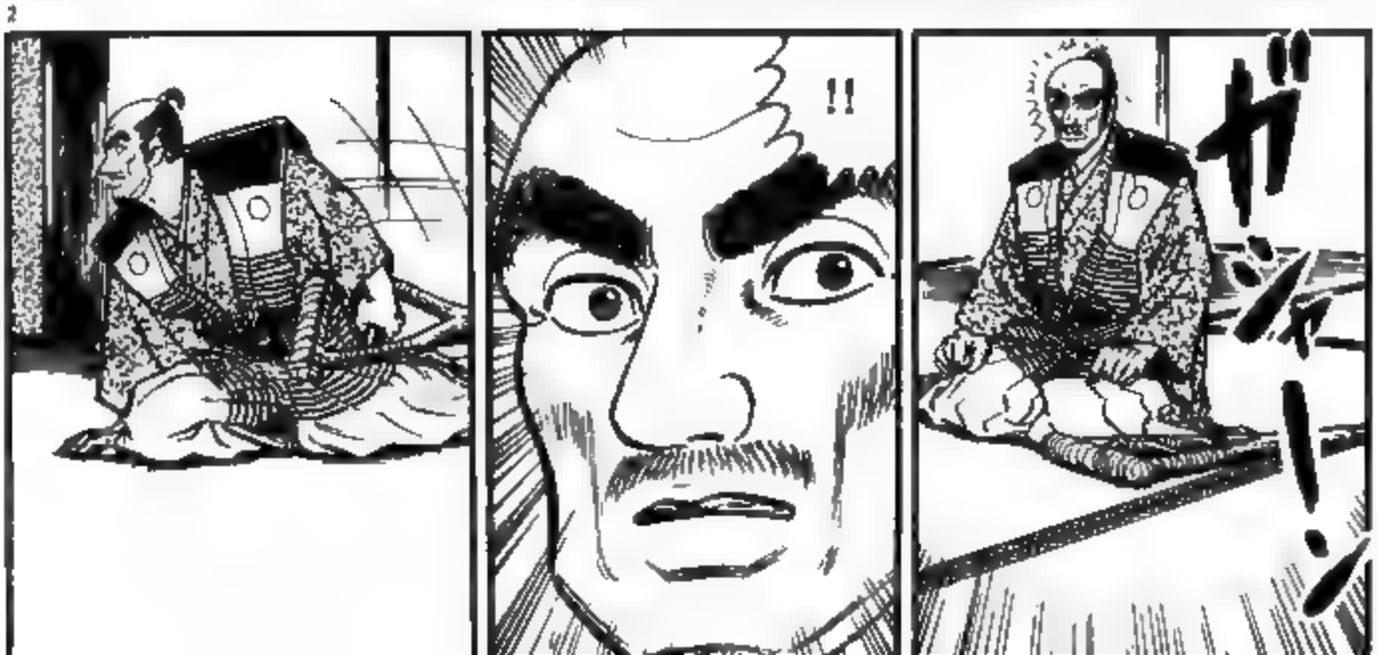

ピッ
30
……
ドクン
ドクン
ドクン
……
ドクン
ドクン

Chapter 5:
The Trap




THANK YOU FOR YOUR TROUBLE.
PLEASE WAIT HERE FOR A LITTLE.
THEN, I WILL GO INFORM TENKAI-DONO...


THEY RECEIVED ME...
THOUGH IT WAS SUCH A SUDDEN VISIT...
.....


!!
ガシャ!

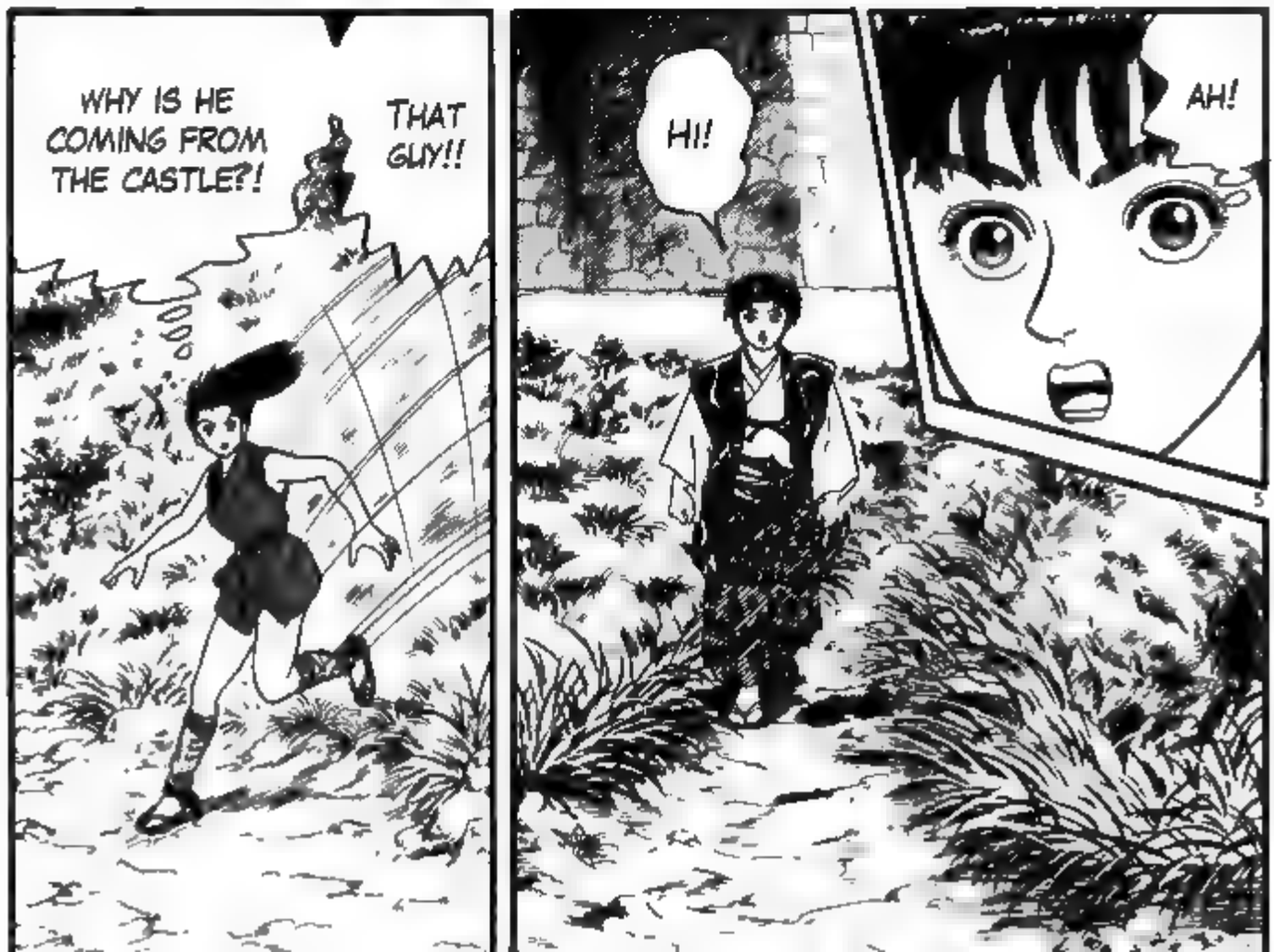

!!
DAMN
!!


GRAMPA
...


HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT... HE'LL COME BACK SAFELY FOR SURE, RIGHT?
DON'T YOU THINK SO!?
I WONDER IF ONE KOKU HAS ALREADY PASSED


I'M SURE OF IT!
ONE KOKU'S ALREADY PASSED!




WHY IS HE COMING FROM THE CASTLE?!
THAT GUY!!
HI!
AH!


IT'S ME, KŌDZUKI KAZUMA, AZUMI-CHAN!
WELL, ...
I DON'T CARE IF YOU THINK OF ME LIKE THAT...
WHO'RE YOU!? A SUNPU CASTLE SAMU-RAI!?
YOU JUST NOW CAME FROM THE CASTLE?

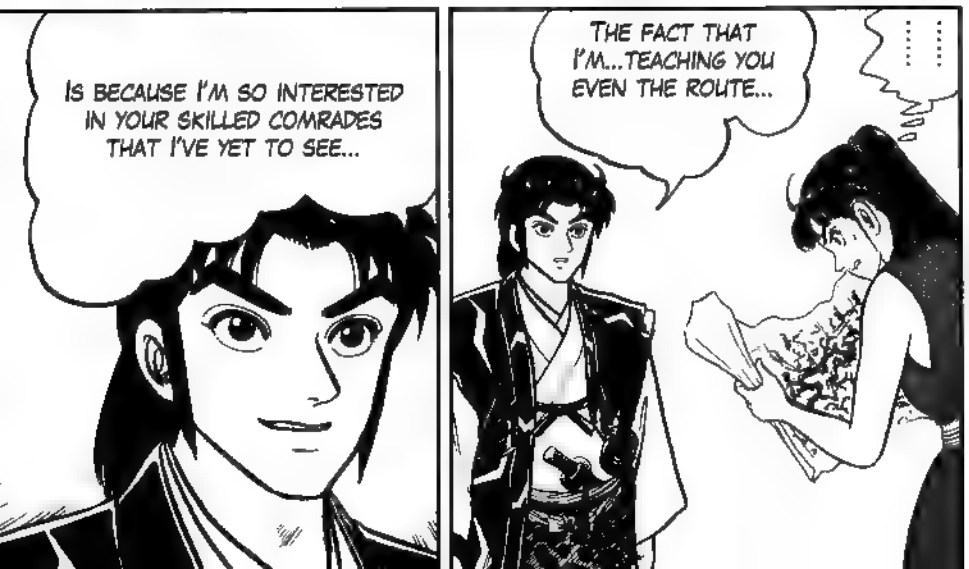

....WERE YOU LONELY?


I'VE COME TO INFORM YOU THAT
AT PRESENT, OBATA GESSAI ...
.....
WHAT HAPPENED?!
HE'S BEEN ARR-ESTED.
AND HE'S BEING ESCORTED AS A CRIMINAL.
WHAT !??!
DAMN IEYASU, I KNEW IT!! IT'S LIKE I WAS IMAGINING IT...SHIIIT!!
ESCORTED, YOU SAID!
WHERE TO!?


SHOULD HAVE SOME COMRADES WITH WHOM YOU TRAINED IN YOUR BUJUTSU, RIGHT?
YOU ...
WHERE TOOOOO!?!?
WILL SURELY APPEAR TO RESCUE GESSAI-DONO.
THOSE FEN-CERS
.....
8
WAS EMPLOYED AS AN ESCORT.
A GROUP OF RONIN, PROUD OF THEIR SKILL AND UNABLE TO FIND WORK,
TO PREPARE FOR THAT,

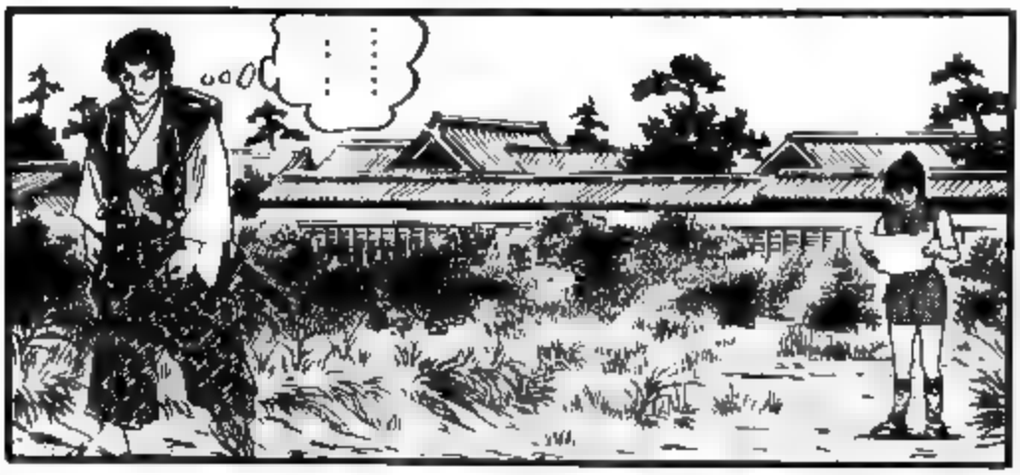

IF YOU CAN SLAY THEM AND ESCORT HIM TO THE DESTINATION,
HIS COMRADES WILL SURELY SHOW UP TO RESCUE HIM.
THEN, FROM HERE ON, I'LL LEAVE THE ESCORT OF THIS PRISONER TO YOU.
YOU'LL GET THE REST OF THE RICH REWARD AS PROMISED!


HE HE HE! WHO'S THIS OLD MAN!? WHAT'S HE GUILTY OF!?
OOOH!


IS BECAUSE I'M SO INTERESTED IN YOUR SKILLED COMRADES THAT I'VE YET TO SEE...
THE FACT THAT I'M...TEACHING YOU EVEN THE ROUTE...
.....


OR HE WILL BE EXECUTED.
YOU MUST INFORM YOUR COMRADES AND GO QUICKLY,
HERE... THERE'S SIGNED THE ROUTE OF THE CONVOY...
GRAM-PA...
GRAM-PA...






SEE YOU.


DECE-IVING...
HIDING ...


SHIIIIT...WHAT AN UNPLEASANT DUTY...


AM I AN IDLE SPECT-ATOR?

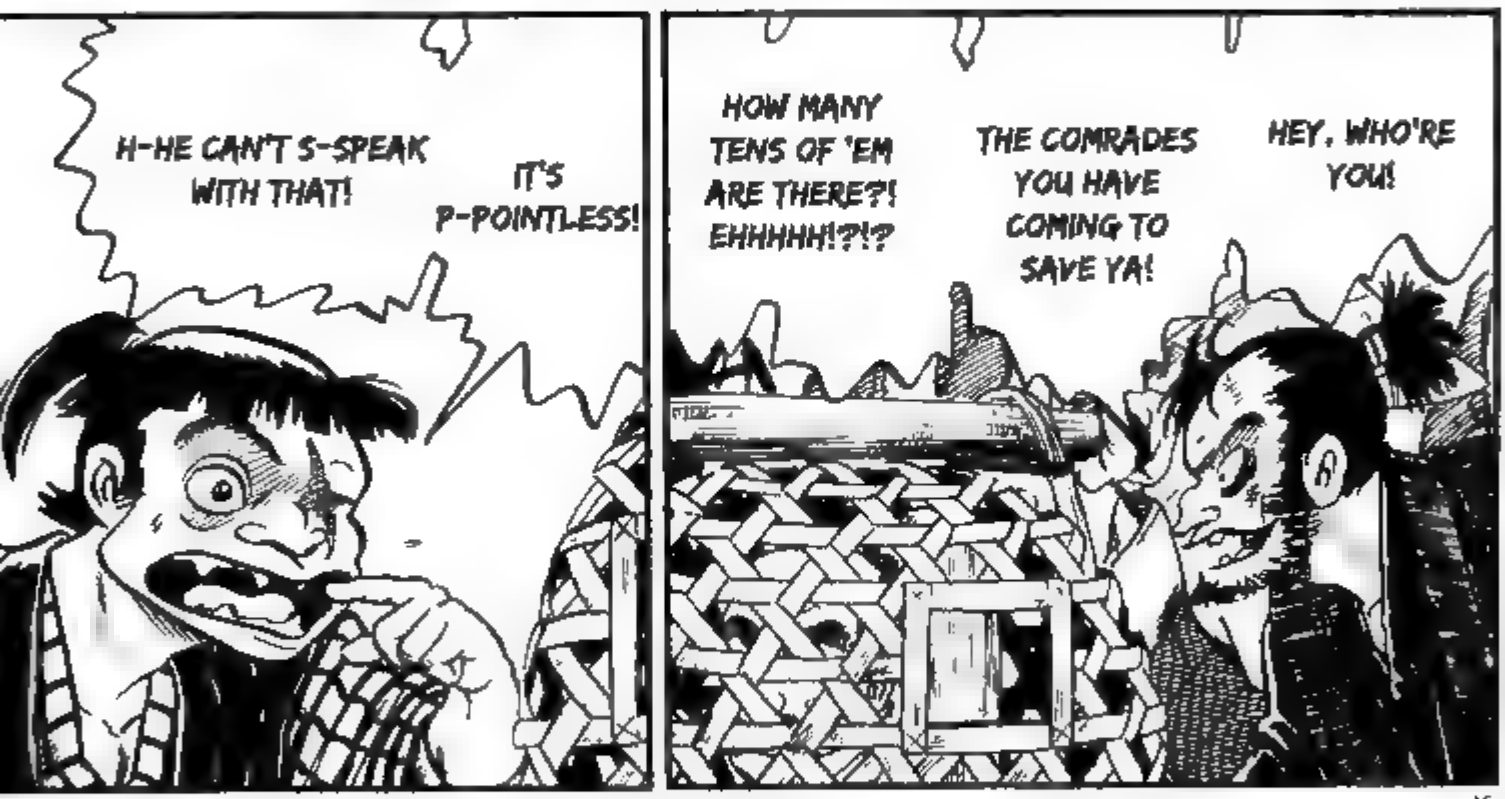

GRAM-
PA...
GRAM-
PA...
Ooo


I PRAY YOU'RE SAFE!
GRAMPA,
I'LL RESCUE YOU FOR SURE!
WAIT FOR ME!
GRAM-
PA...


ドガガドガガ!!


IN OTHER WORDS, THE GOAL ISN'T THE ESCORT...
I THINK IT'S FINE EVEN IF WE WAIT IN STANDBY.
LET'S CHOOSE AN EASY PLACE TO PREPARE FOR AN ATTACK.
WITHOUT BEING HASTY..


DAMNED RIGHT!
WHO COME TO SAVE GRAMPS HERE.
BUT TO SLAUGHTER THE ONES

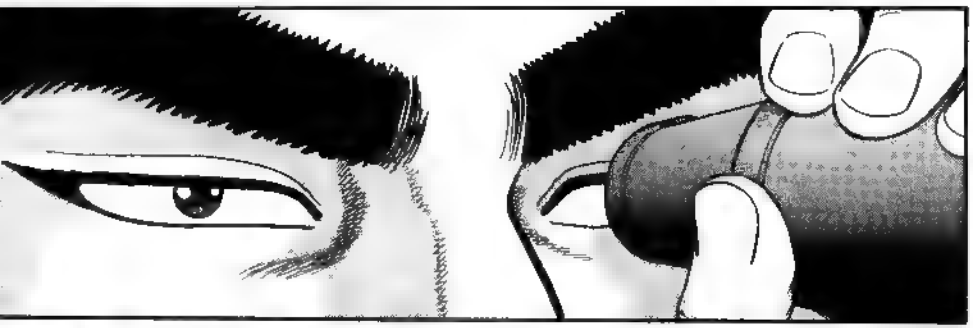

H-HE CAN'T S-SPEAK WITH THAT!
IT'S P-POINTLESS!
HOW MANY TENS OF 'EM ARE THERE?! EHHHHH!?!?
THE COMRADES YOU HAVE COMING TO SAVE YA!
HEY, WHO'RE YOU!

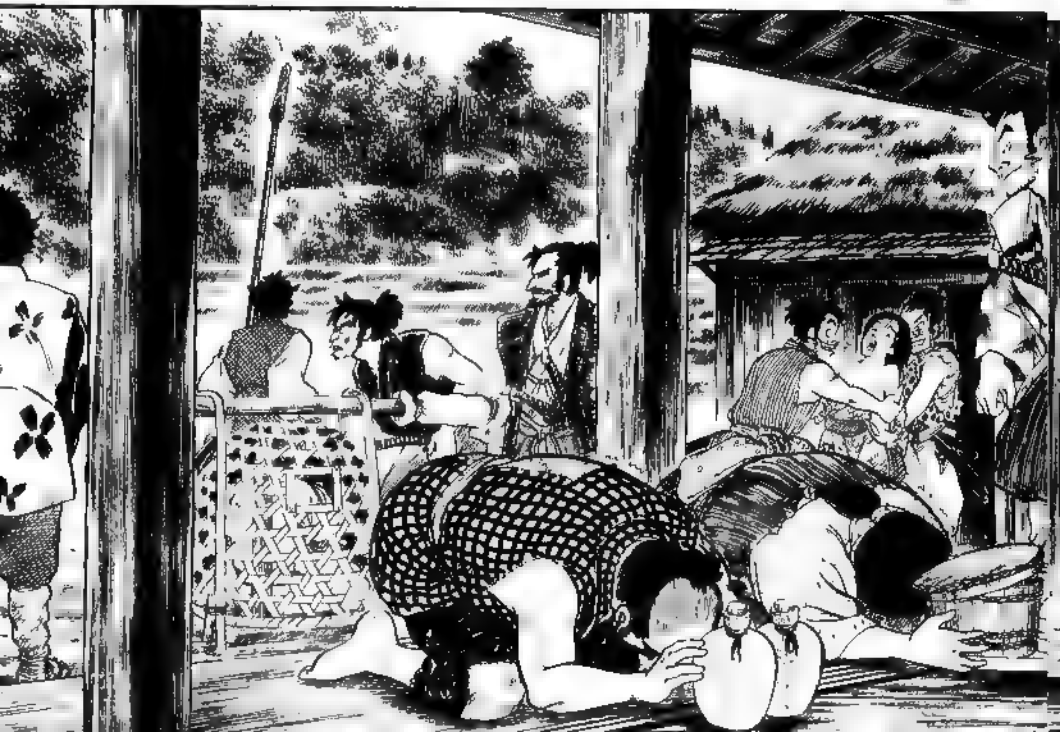

WAAAHAHA HAHAHAHA!
AND FROM TOKUGAWA-SAMA, THE RULER OF THIS COUNTRY!
I DON'T CARE HOW MANY TENS OF THEM THERE'RE!! IT'S A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO RAKE IN BIG MONEY THAT WE'VE NEVER SEEN!!

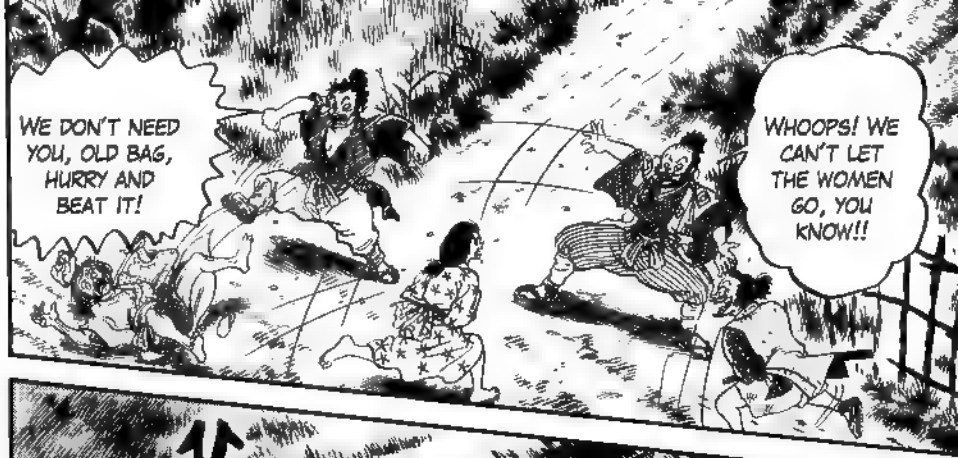

ISN'T THAT IDEAL?
WHILE WAITING FOR THE ENEMY...
HAVING FUN
FOOD AN' WOMEN, TOO, RIGHT?
IT'S GOT A GOOD VIEW.. AND IT'S GOT SAKE,
UMM.. WHY?
HEY! WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT VILLAGE!?
I SEE... OOOH.
WE CAN HAVE AN EXTENSIVE VIEW FROM HERE!
HOW CONVE-NIENT!
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY WANT TO AMBUSH THEM FORM THERE...
ARE THEY PLANNING TO GO INTO THAT VILLAGE?

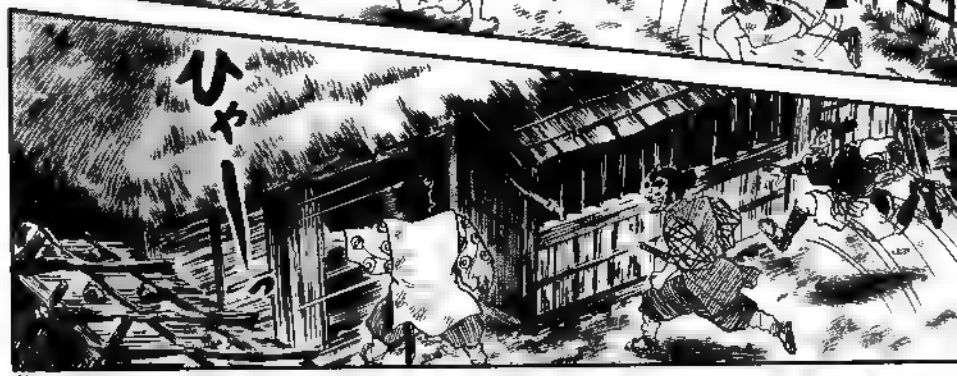

AND HOW SKILLED THEY ARE!
HOW MANY THEY ARE,
I CAN CLEARLY SEE,
THE ASSASSINS WHO ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY OBATA GESSAI...THEY WILL ALL COME TO RESCUE HIM FOR SURE!!
YAGYU MUNENORI








WE DON'T NEED YOU, OLD BAG, HURRY AND BEAT IT!
WHOOPS! WE CAN'T LET THE WOMEN GO, YOU KNOW!!


ひゃ



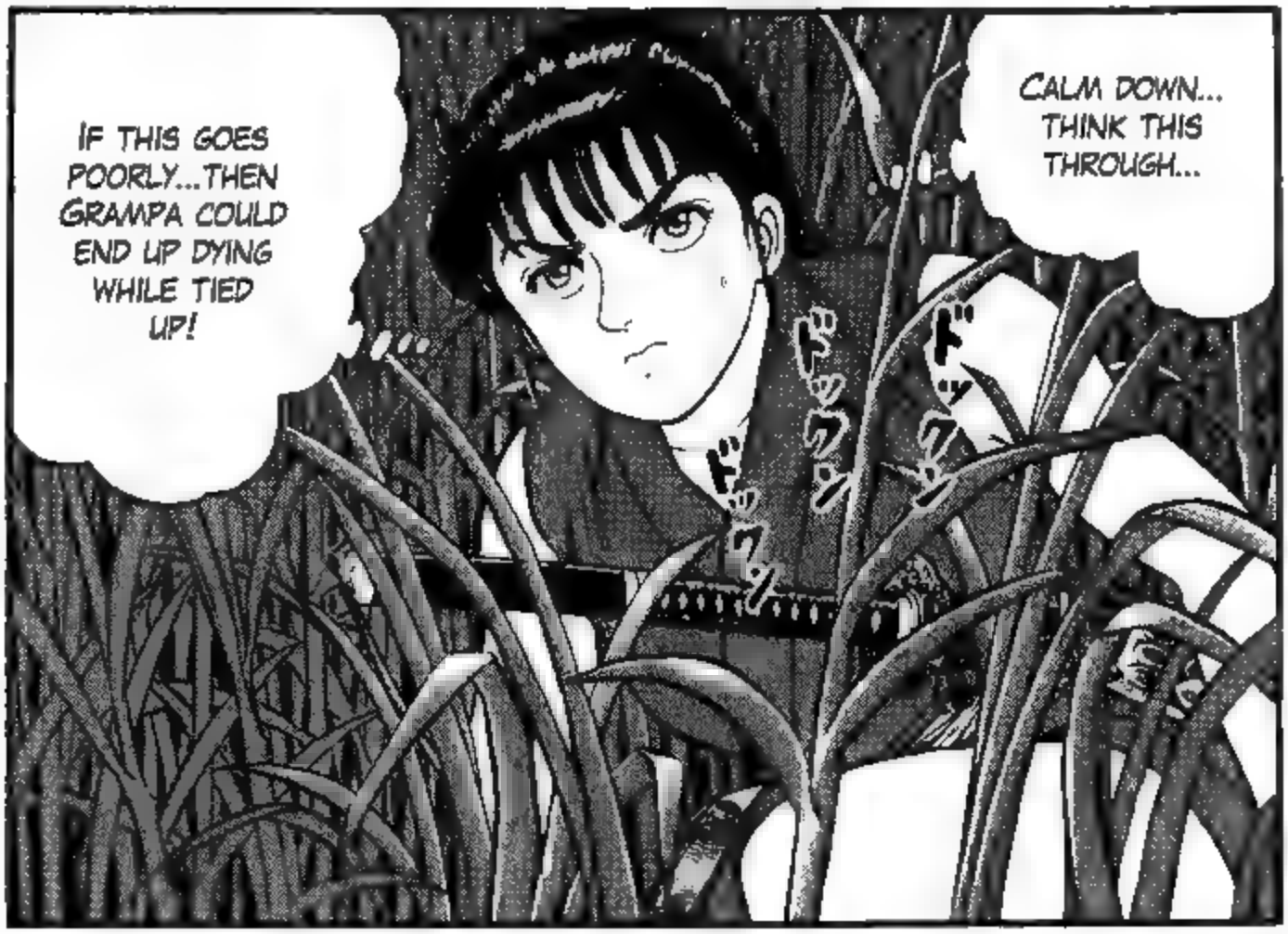



IF AZUMI COMES...
THE RŌNIN ARE JUST BAIT, THE ENEMY IS WATCHING FROM SOMEWHERE.
THEY'LL KNOW AZUMI IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT.
THE ENEMY WILL KNOW HER FACE AS WELL...


HE'S INSIDE A PRISONER CAGE... SHIT...
GRAM-PA...
23
I'LL SAVE YOU, GRAMPA!
DAMN YOU, IEYASU! DAMN YOU!


COME NOW... COME OUT!! HOW MANY ARE YOU...?
THEY SHOULD SURELY BE ABLE TO BREAK THROUGH THESE RŌNIN!
BUT UNFORTUNATELY... THEY WILL SURELY NOT BE ABLE TO RESCUE OBATA GESSAI ALIVE.

24


CALM DOWN... THINK THIS THROUGH...
IF THIS GOES POORLY...THEN GRAMPA COULD END UP DYING WHILE TIED UP!
ドックン!
ドックン!


Chapter
6:
Outlaws
and pride
in one's
own
skills.


Should we rise a flag or something to let the guys who're coming know that we're here!? Waah ha ha ha!!
THIS PLACE IS EASY TO SEE. THEY WON'T OVERLOOK IT.
COME! HURRY AND COME!
AZUMI ...

2


NOW THAT THE TOYOTOMI HAD BEEN WIPED OUT, IEYASU'S DEATH WOULD BE TOO GREAT A SHOCK. A SOLID TOKUGAWA ORDER THAT EXTENDED FOR MANY GENERATIONS HAD TO BE SOLIDIFIED.
AT THAT TIME, TENKAI WAS IN A TEMPLE NEAR SUNPU CASTLE.

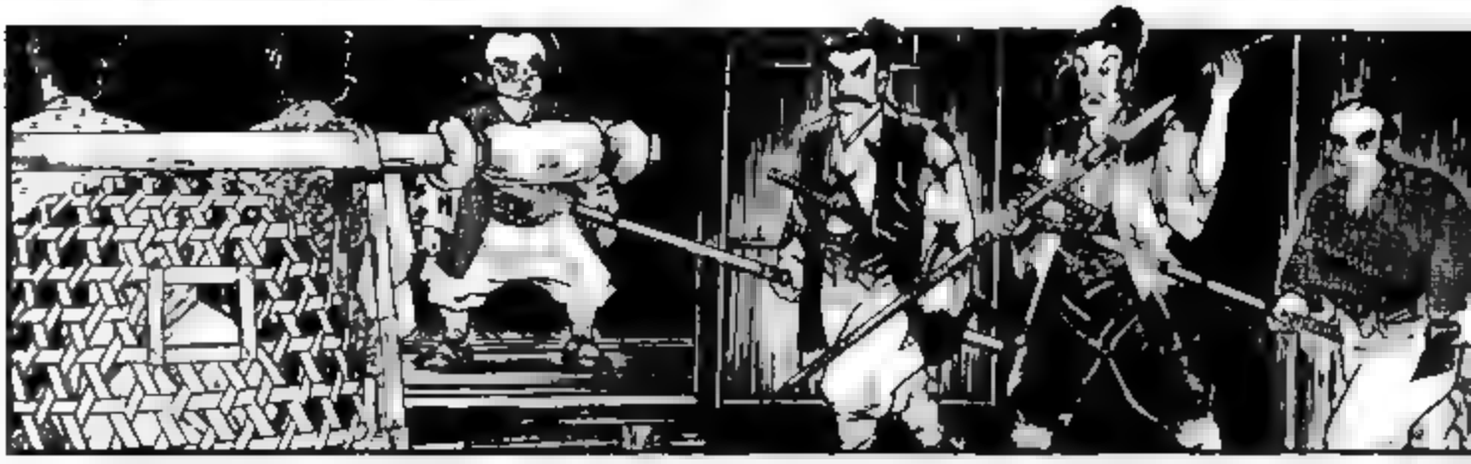
THE CASTLE ESCORT HAS ARRIVED.

IN THIS PERIOD, IEYASU AND HIS ADVISORS ESTABLISHED RULES FOR THE DAIMYŌ TO POSSESS ONLY ONE CASTLE IN EACH FEUDAL DOMAIN AND DECIDED THE BUKE SHOHATTO, THE KINCHŪ NARABINI KUGE SHOHATTO AND THE SHOSHŪ HONZAN HONJI SHOHATTO.

TENKAI THOUGHT HARD FOR DAYS AND DAYS, WORKING EVEN DURING HIS SLEEPING HOURS.

FOR THAT MATTER, EVEN THE FACT THAT HIS CONTACT WITH OBATA GESSAI HADN'T RETURNED, WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A SUPERFLUOUS CONCERN...AND HE HADN'T TAKEN ANY MEASURES AT ALL.


THEY SAY THAT THE ENEMIES ARE VERY SKILLED AND ELUSIVE.
IT'D BE WISE TO BE PREPARED.
YOU'RE RIGHT!



4


OH?


WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING?!
IF HE'S KILLED, HE WON'T BE ANYMORE THE BAIT TO LURE OUT OUR PREY!
YOU WANNA KILL HIM ALREADY?
OURS IS TO EXECUTE THIS MAN! LET'S ALL CARRY OUT OUR OWN ROLES!
YOUR ROLE IS TO SLAY THE ONES WHO COME TO RESCUE HIM!
NATURALLY, WE WON'T KILL HIM UNTIL THEY SHOW UP.
.....


WHEN THEY GET LURED OUT, HE'LL BE EXE-CUTED?
THAT SO?
OOH
WHERE'LL THEY COME FROM?
THEY'RE NOT SHOWING UP AT ALL.
WHERE ARE YOU HIDING?
C'MON, GET OUT!






OR FROM WHERE THEY'RE COMING!
THE ENEMY HAS SPLIT INTO!
WE'VE GOT NO IDEA HOW MANY GROUPS
ARE YOU PROPERLY GUARDING ALL THE DIRECTIONS?


GO HAVE A LOOK AROUND!
HEY!


DON'T YOU ORDER ME AROUND!!!


DON'T COMPLAIN! JUST GO!


WHY ME?!
HUH? ME?


YOU'VE ACTED LIKE THE BOSS FOR SOME TIME NOW! BUT..

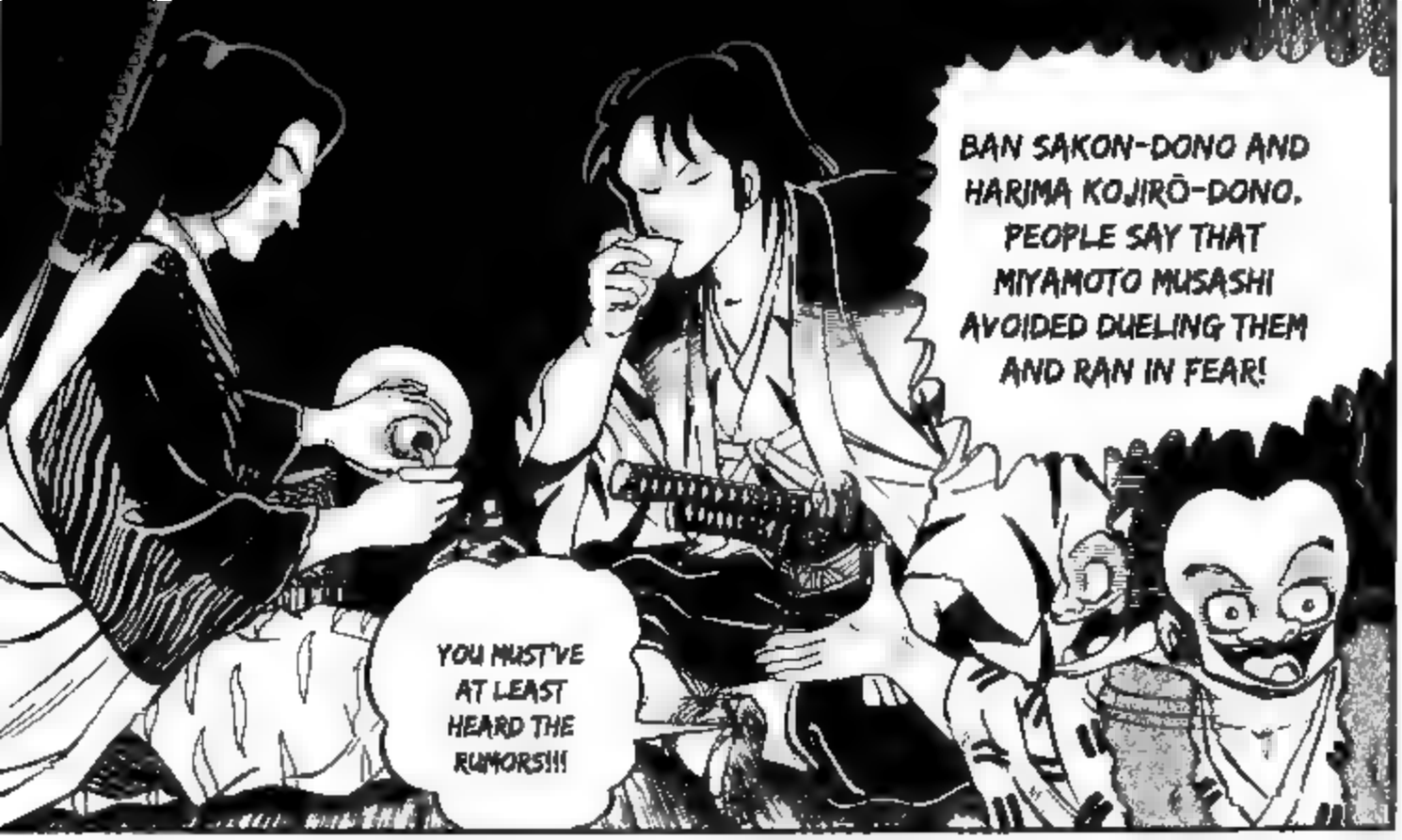

WHY'VE YOU ONLY BEEN SITTING INSIDE GUZZLING SAKE FOR A WHILE NOW, EH?!
THAT'S RIGHT! I'M WITH HIM ON THIS!
WHO DEC-IDED THAT?!


HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT WITHOUT FIGHTING !?
TSK!
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE MOST SKILLED BECOME THE BOSSES, RIGHT!?


EVERYONE'S PROBABLY BUYING INTO THINKING THEY'RE THE STRONGEST!


THESE TWO MEN...
LISTEN WELL!
HOOOOO...YOU'RE CLUELESS, EH!?


THEY ARE...
YOU KNOW!!


BAN SAKON-DONO AND HARIMA KOJIRŌ-DONO. PEOPLE SAY THAT MIYAMOTO MUSASHI AVOIDED DUELING THEM AND RAN IN FEAR!
YOU MUST'VE AT LEAST HEARD THE RUMORS!!!


LIAR!
NOPE.
THREE YEARS BEFORE, MIYAMOTO MUSASHI HAD DEFEATED SASAKI KOJIRŌ AT GANRYŪJIMA. AT THIS TIME, MUSASHI'S NAME WAS ECHOING AMONG THE MASTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY.


I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES!
IT'S NO LIE.


YEP.
AT THE BIZEN TOWN POST?
IT WAS... TWO YEARS PAST...


SAW US SURROUNDED BY AT LEAST TWENTY ASSASINS.
THAT TIME, TOO...
WE DID DŌJŌYABURI REPEATEDLY AND...WE EARNED A MOUNTAIN WORTH OF RESENTMENT EVERYWHERE...




WAS MIYA-MOTO MUSASHI!
AMONG THE SPECTATORS WATCHING THEM DESTROY THOSE MEN...


DID YOU KNOW HIS FACE!?
HOW COULD YOU TELL IT WAS MUSASHI !?

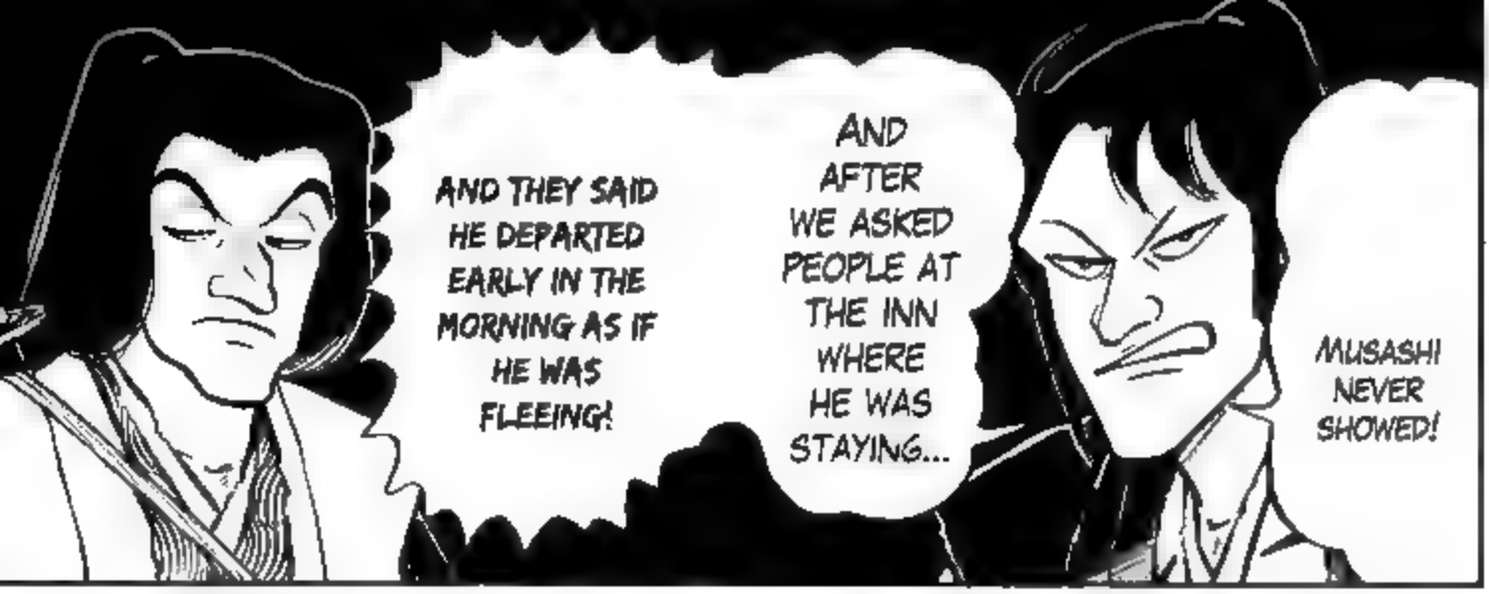

.....
.....
.....


THEREFORE, I TOLD THESE TWO HERE...
YES! I'D MET HIM ONCE BEFORE...


NATURALLY, WE REQUESTED A MATCH WITH MUSASHI!
FOR A MASTER OF MARTIAL ARTS, THAT WAS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE A NAME FOR HIMSELF THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE NATION!


AND CHOSE THE TIME AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT DAY.
MUSASHI ACCEPTED.


A-AND... THEN WHAT HAPPENED...?


MUSASHI NEVER SHOWED!
AND AFTER WE ASKED PEOPLE AT THE INN WHERE HE WAS STAYING...
AND THEY SAID HE DEPARTED EARLY IN THE MORNING AS IF HE WAS FLEEING!




MUSASHI, WHO SAW US SLAY...
TWENTY SWORDSMEN IN AN INSTANT...
GOT COLD FEET AND FLED!


MIYAMOTO MUSASHI DID THIS!
DID YOU HEAR?!


YOU DAMN GASBAGS!
TSK! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!


INEXCU-SABLE ...
HEY, WHAT'D YOU SAY?


WHY'D YOU GO BROKE AND HAVE TO TAKE THIS JOB!?
IF YOU'VE GOT SUCH TERRIFIC SKILL LIKE MUSASHI, WHY DIDN'T YOU GET HIRED FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE!?


COME MUCH CLOSER?
WANNA TEST US?
HEY, WHAT...


SCARED TO GET CLOSE?
.....


WHERE'S GRAMPA?
ガヤガヤ
ぐはは
うるせえ
うひ
ひい
えへん

18

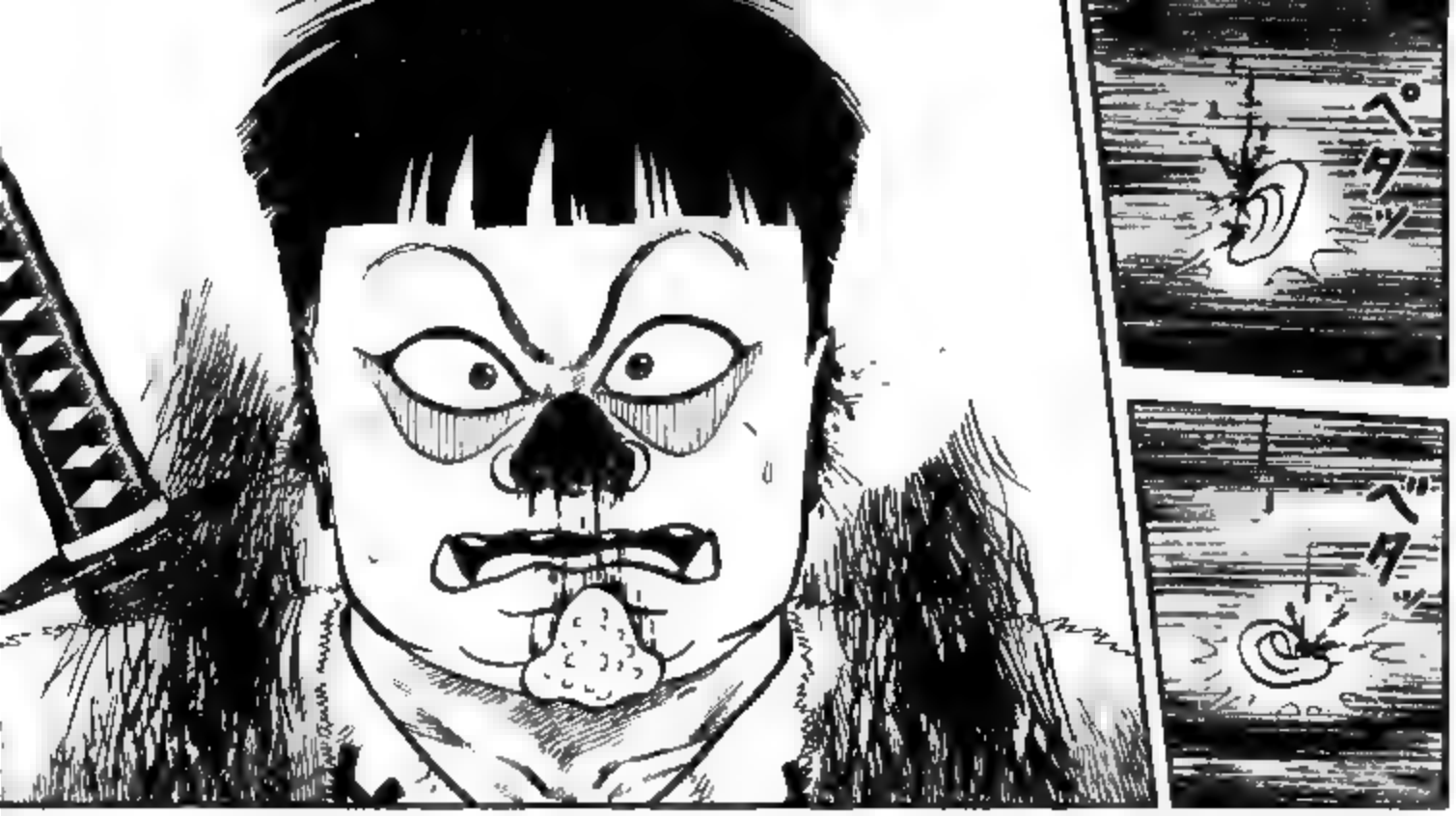

ヒュン
ビッ
ヒュンビッ
ヒュンビッ

19


LIKE THIS?!
ズッ
ズッ






ペタッ
ベタッ




うぎゃ
ぐは


お前
DID YA SEE THAT?!
HEHE HEEE!


WE'RE SAFE!
NO MATTER HOW MANY COME,
THAT;S REASS-URING !!
OH!
MONEY TO THOSE WHO DON'T PULL THEIR WEIGHT!
WE'RE NOT SO SOFT HEARTED TO GIVE
23
IN PROPORTION TO HOW MANY WE KILL!
WE'LL SHARE THE REWARD MONEY
WE'LL ACCEPT NO COMPLAINTS!


HEY!
SWITCH
!!!!

24


IS GRAMPA ON THE OTHER SIDE?
I HAVE TO FIND HIM!
SWIIITCH!
ドッ
ドッ
ドッ

Chapter 7: By Decree




DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
I EXECUTE YOU BY DECREE!
SIR!

2


AND IMMEDIATELY THRUST THE SPEARS WITHIN THE CAGE.
MAKE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THOSE WHO COME TO RESCUE HIM HEAR THE WORDS 'OBATA GESSAI, I EXECUTE YOU BY DECREE.'
THAT IS RIGHT.
YES SIR!

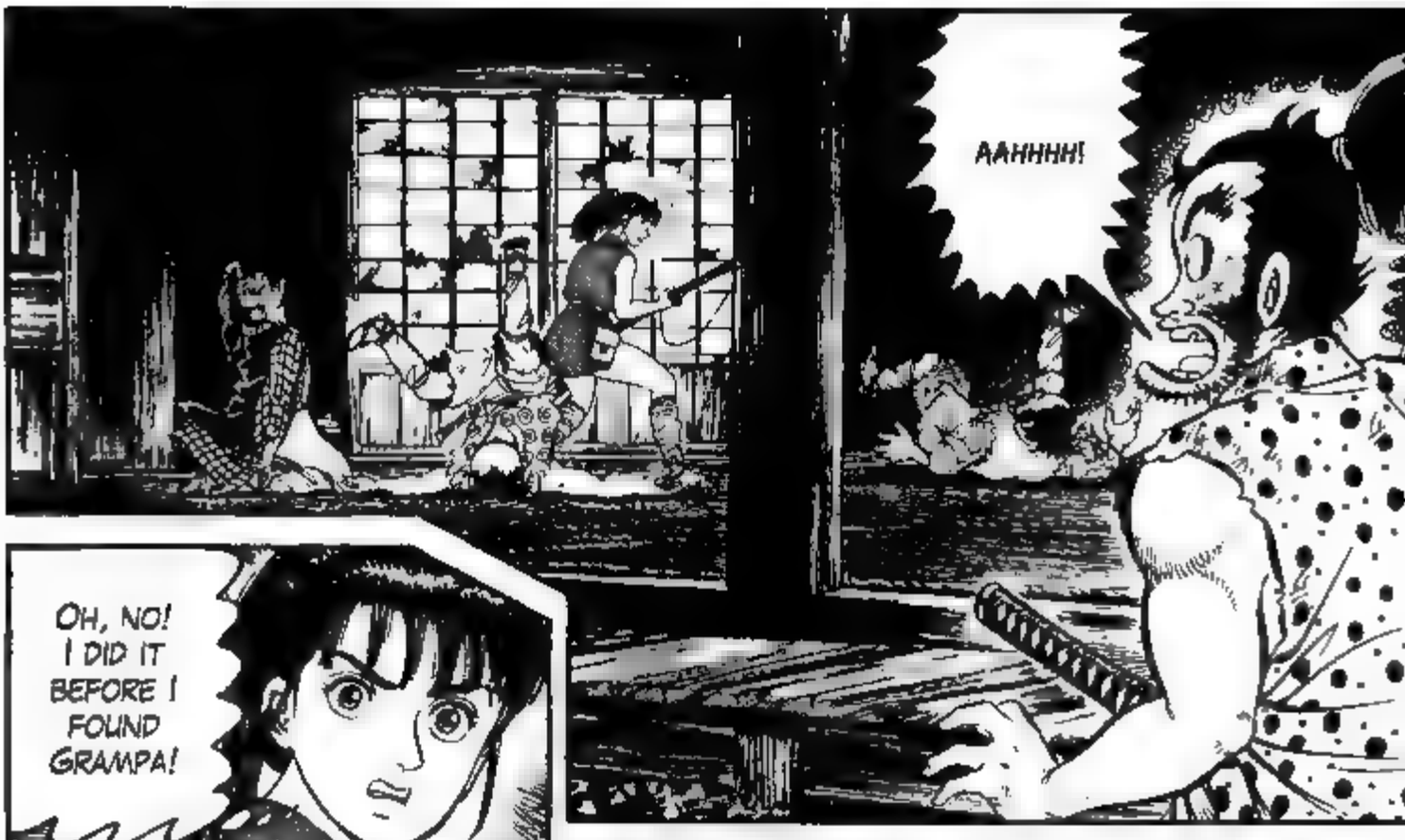

OH!
THAT MAN THOUGHT I'M A VILLAGE GIRL...
RIGHT!
SINCE THEY'RE ALL HIRED RÖNIN,
NOBODY KNOWS MY FACE...


THERE WAS STILL A WOMAN!
AH!!
I'M THE F-FIRST!
I-I FOUND HER, SO...
WHERE IS GR-AMPA?


HEHE! WHO CATCHES HER GOES FIRST!
S-SHE'S MY WOMAN!
WHERE ARE YOU, GRAMPA?
NOT THIS WAY


¡HEEE!


ガッ
グッ
ド


AAHHHH!


OH, NO!
I DID IT
BEFORE I
FOUND
GRAMPA!


THEY'RE
HERE NOW!


GOT IT!
WE STAB HIM IN THREE AT THE SAME TIME WHEN I GIVE THE SIGNAL!!
NOT YET!

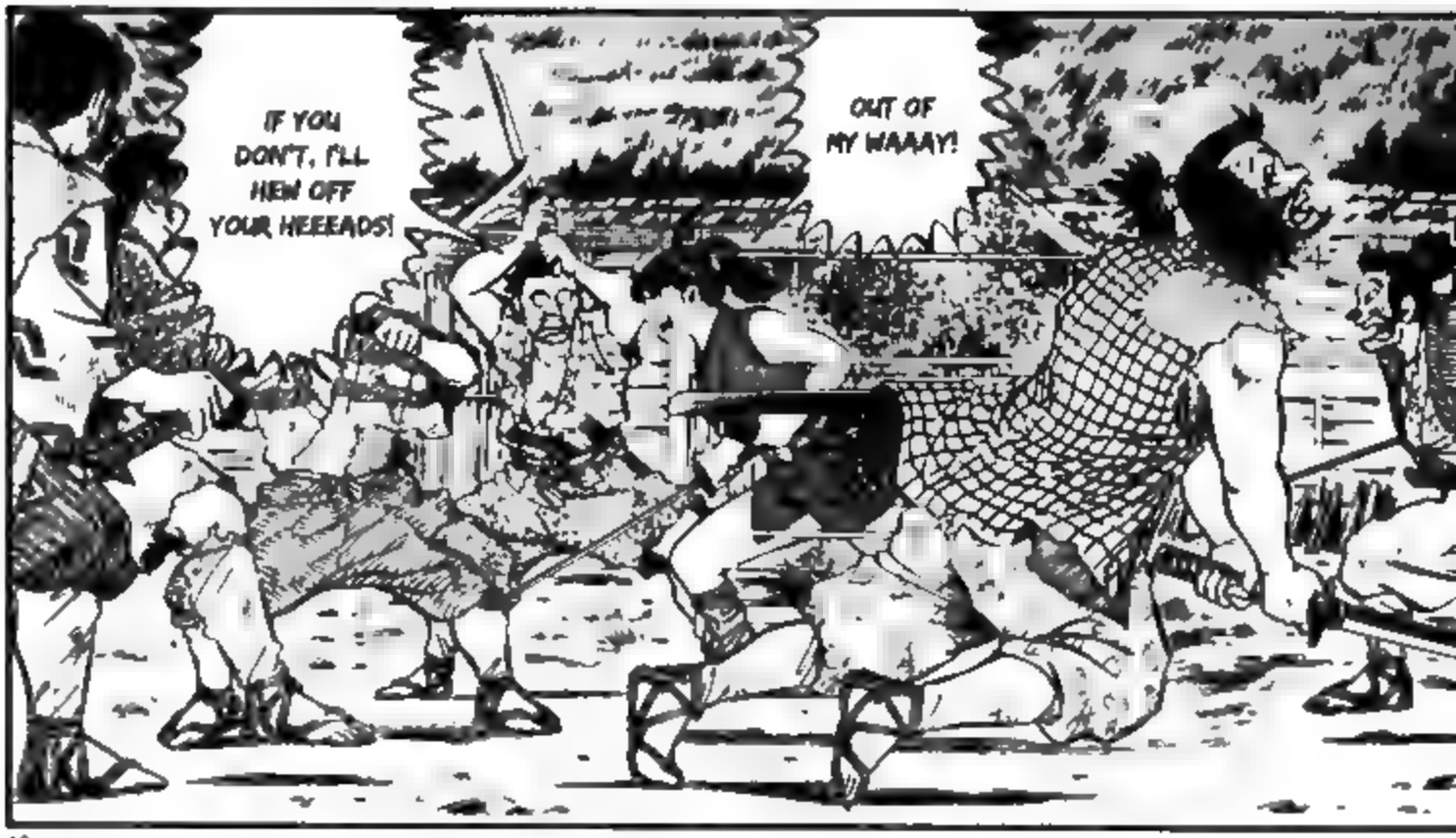

AZUMI...


SO, THEY'RE HERE...
THAT WAY!!!


THAT GIRL JUST TOOK DOWN THREE MEN IN AN INSTANT!
WHAAAAT?! THAT YOUNG GIRL!?

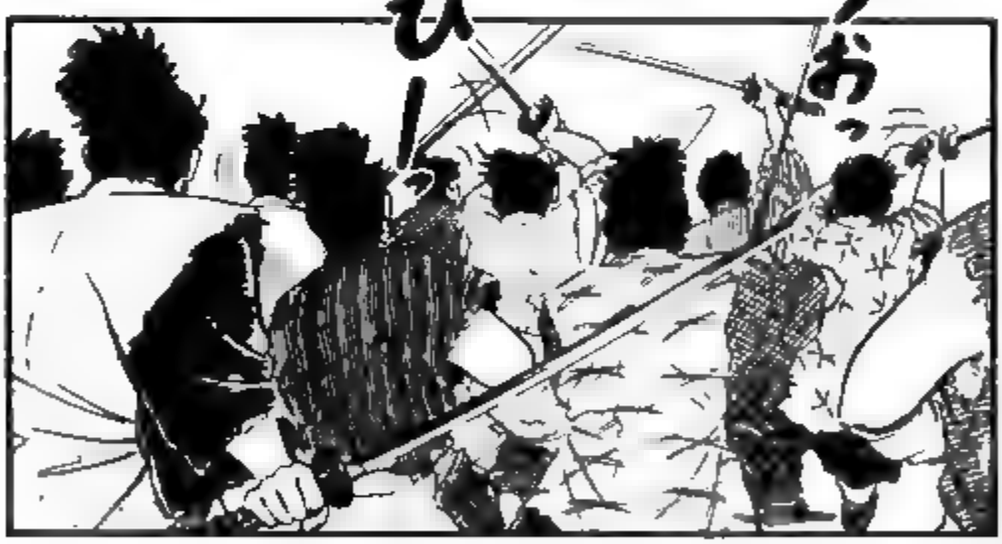

OH!
WHERE !?
HUH?! A WOMAN!?
JUST A YOUNG GIRL!?
WHAT ?!
AH!
GRAM-PA!


WELL, OTHERS ARE SURE TO COME.
JUST A SINGLE GIRL?
THEY WILL FOR SURE!
OOOH!


IF YOU DON'T, I'LL HEW OFF YOUR HEEEADS!
OUT OF MY WAAAY!


WE'VE GOTTA KILL HER OR WE DON'T GET PAID!
KILL HEEEER!
S-SHE'S STRONG!

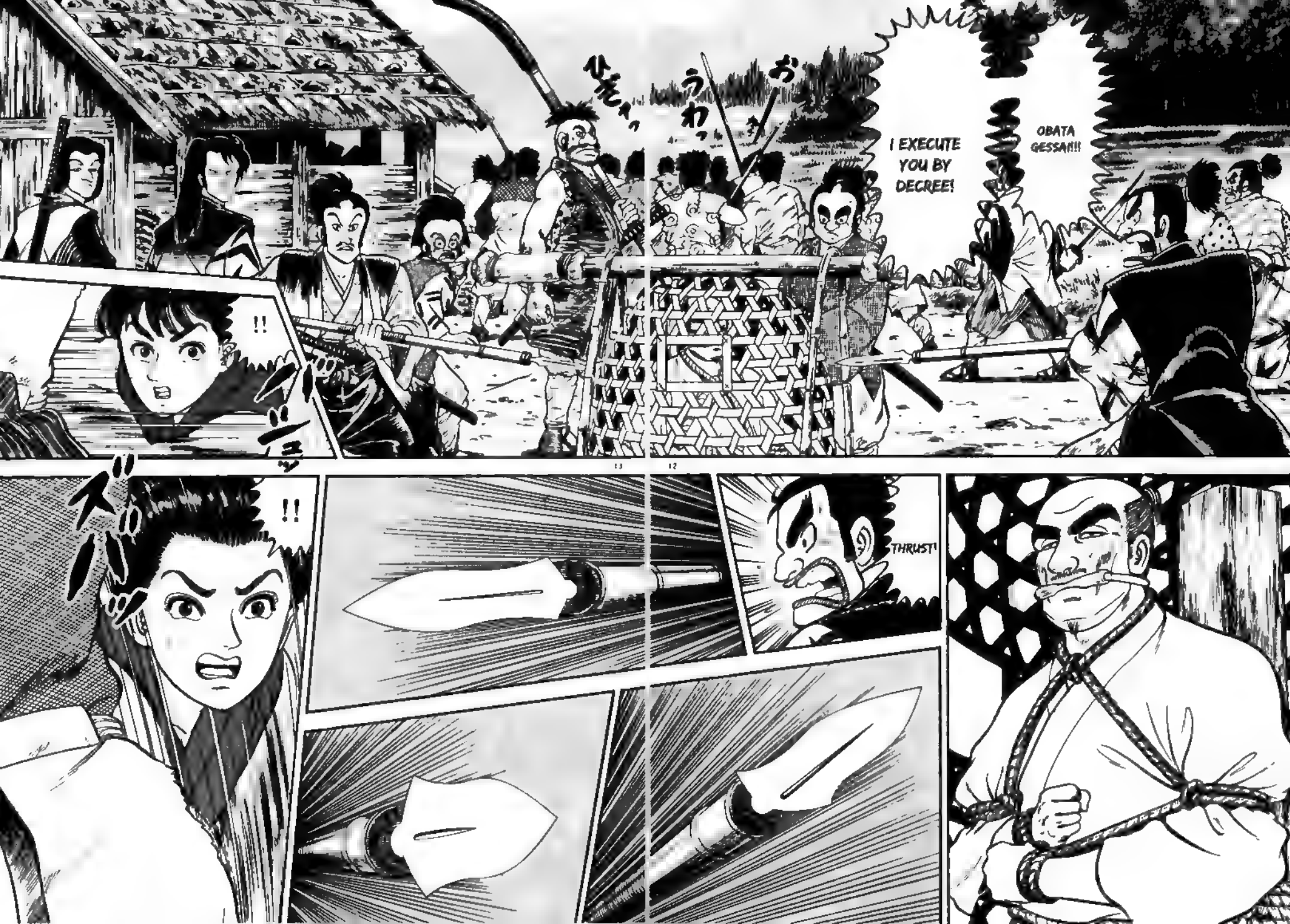

MOVE OUT!
……
……
……


ひ！
うおっ


……


ALRIGHT, IT SHOULD BE FINE NOW...


MOVE!!

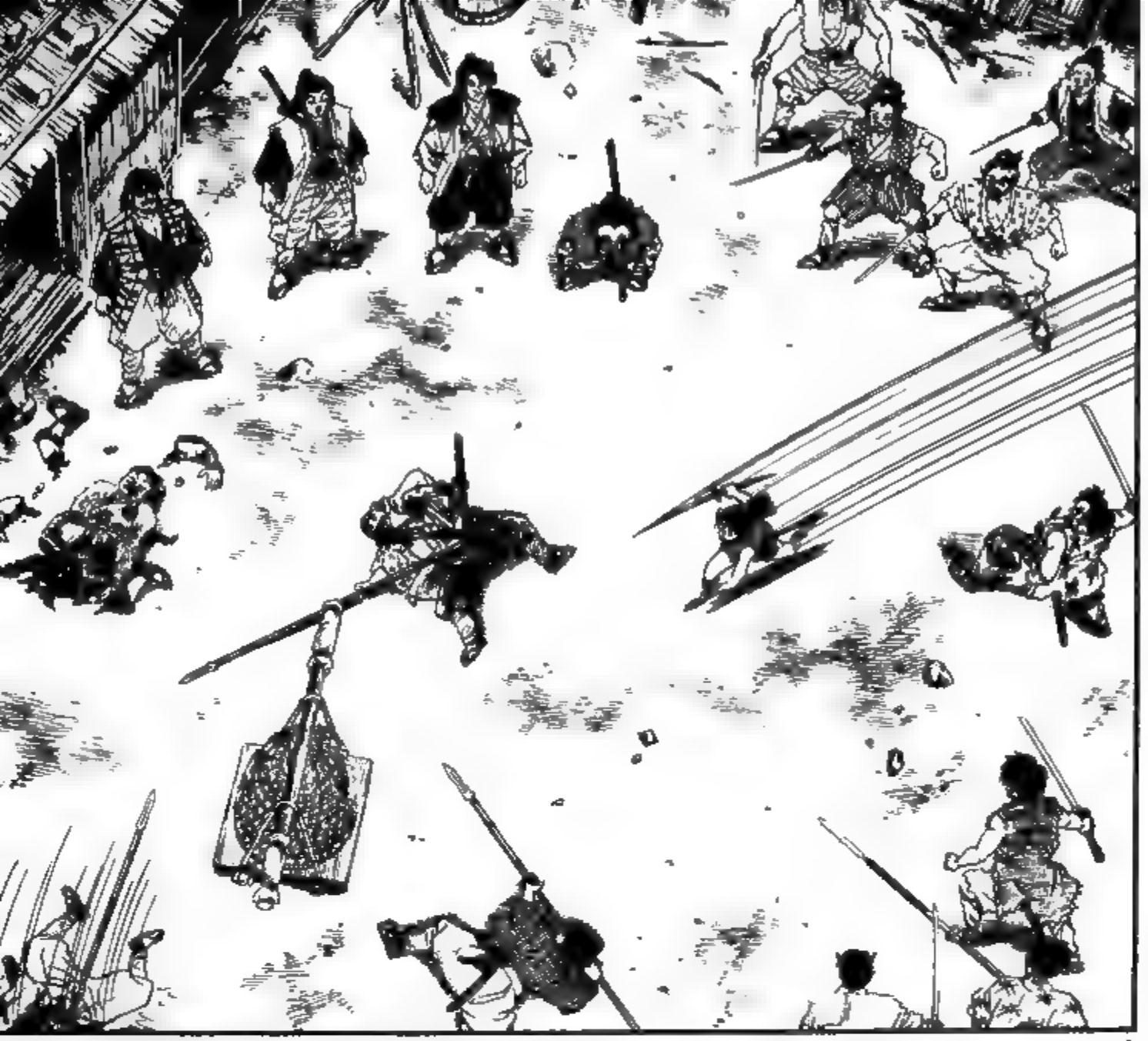

I EXECUTE YOU BY DECREE!
OBATA GESSAN!!!
!!
THRUST!
!!

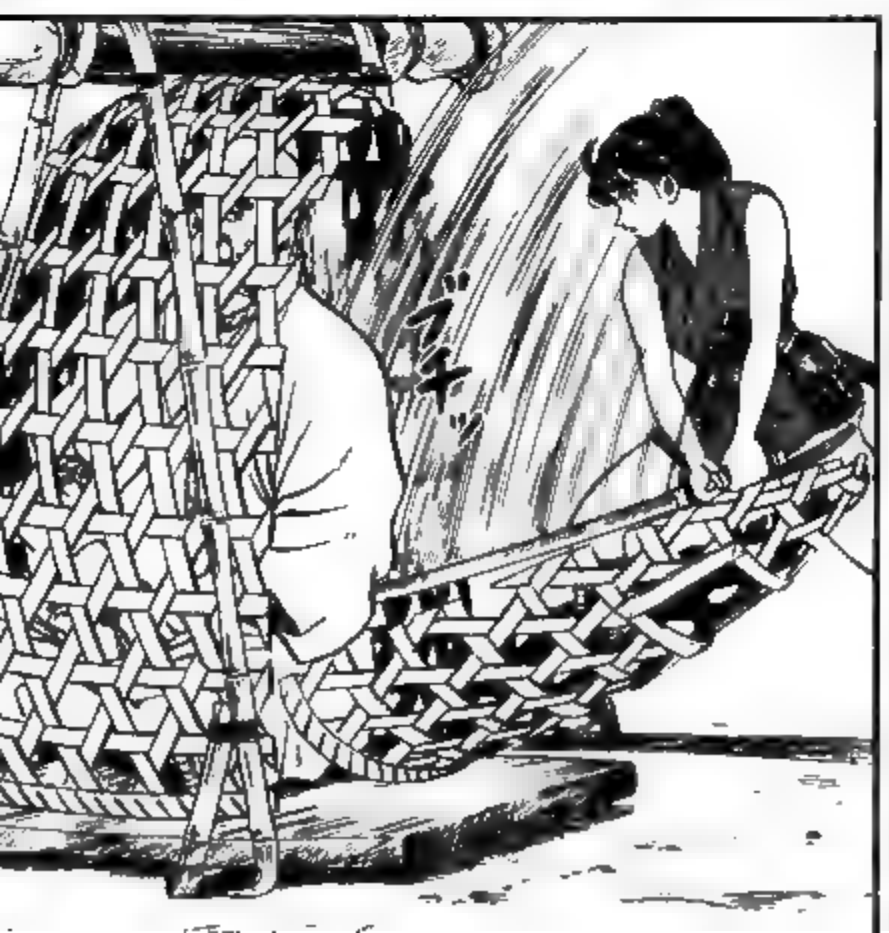

AAAAAH!
GRAMPA!!


ズッ
ズドッ
ズドッ












THANK GOODNESS!


GRAMPA, YOU'RE SAFE!

19

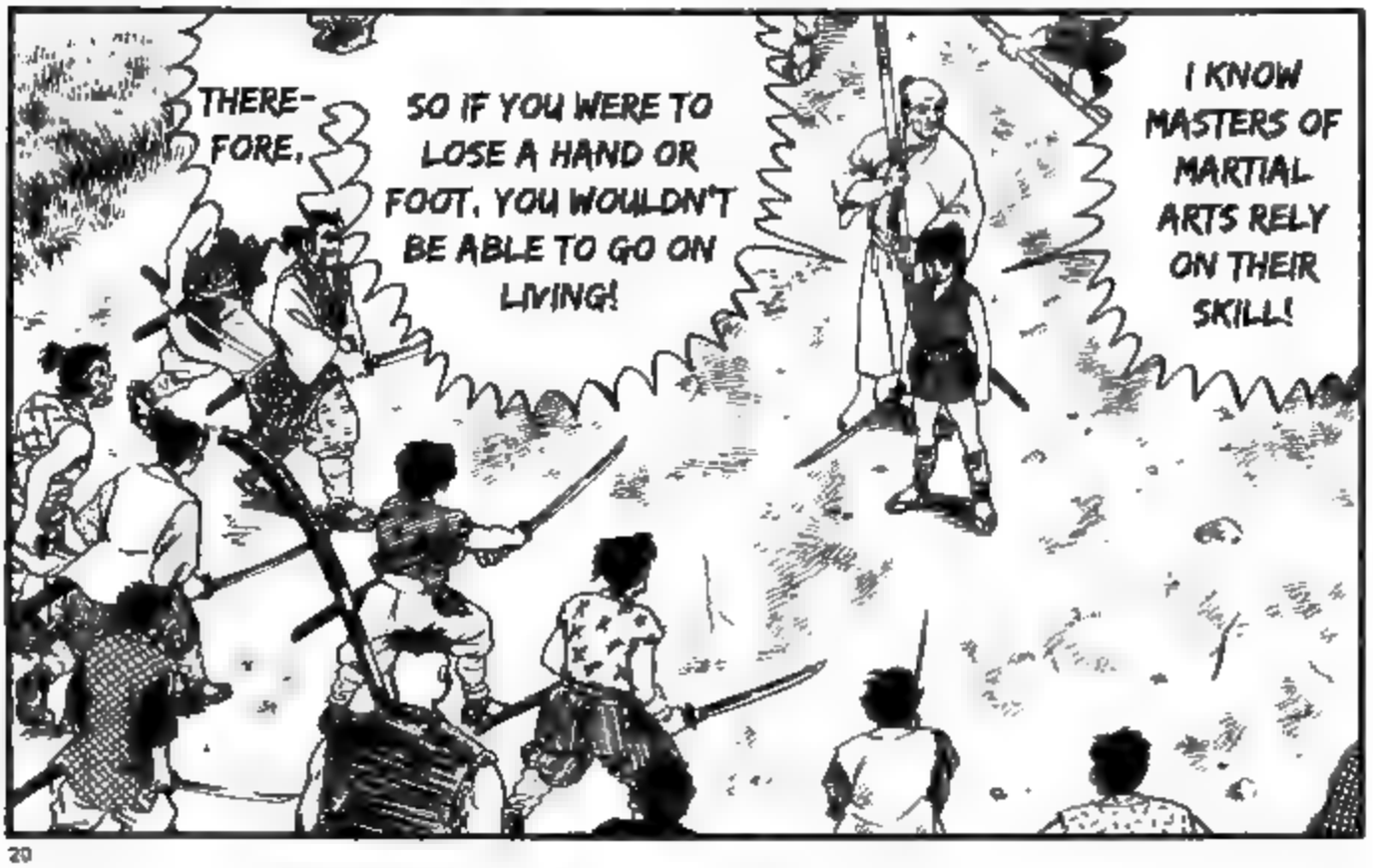

AS YOU SAW, I AM STRONG!
STEP ASIDE! MOVE AWAY!
STRIKE AT ME AND RECEIVE NO MERCY!


NO. OTHERS WILL COME.
IS SHE THE ONLY ONE?!
WHAT?!... ONLY ONE GIRL...

18




WE'VE GOT TO KILL HER TO GET THE MONEY!
EVEN IF SHE'S A LONE WOMAN,
IS SHE THE ONLY ONE?!


THERE-FORE,
SO IF YOU WERE TO LOSE A HAND OR FOOT, YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GO ON LIVING!
I KNOW MASTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS RELY ON THEIR SKILL!


IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE, MAKE WAY!
I'M GONNA KILL ALL THOSE WHO COME AT ME!


ONLY ONE ENEMY MEANS...
HAHAHAH, YOU'RE AN IMPRESSIVE LASS!


AIN'T THAT RIGHT!?
GETS ALL THE REWARD MONEY!
THIS LASS'S KILLER,


I'LL TAKE YA ON!
AAALL RIGHT!


ド
GGHH...
KH...


DON'T WASTE YOUR LIVES!
IT'S USELESS, STEP ASIDE!
ト"
ヲ"
ト"


IT SEEMS...ONLY THIS GIRL HAS SHOWN UP...
WE SAW YOU'RE PRETTY SKILLED!


W-W-W-WE LEAVE HER TO YOU, MAS-TERS!
SHE'S OUT OF SHURIKENS ALREADY!
FIRST TIME I'VE KILLED A YOUNG GIRL, BUT...


I'LL HAVE NO MERCY!


AFTER ALL, IT'S AN ORDER FROM THE SHÖGUN!
YOU WON'T BE LONELY IN THE OTHER WORLD, WE'LL SEND GRAMPS AFTER YOU IMMEDIATELY...




THOSE TWO USE IAI...

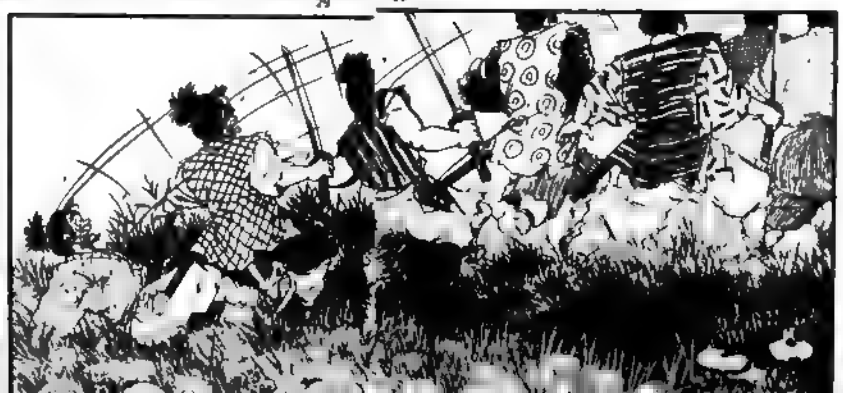

HATE TOKU-GAWA-SAMA OF THIS COUNTRY.
WANNA HATE SOME-ONE,




27
ヒュッ
ハッ
ニッ
26
EEEH!
UOH!!!


OPEN THE WAY!
EEE!










ALL ALONE...
THAT GIRL...
BY THE GODS!


Chapter 8:
The Reed Pipes
And the Cloak

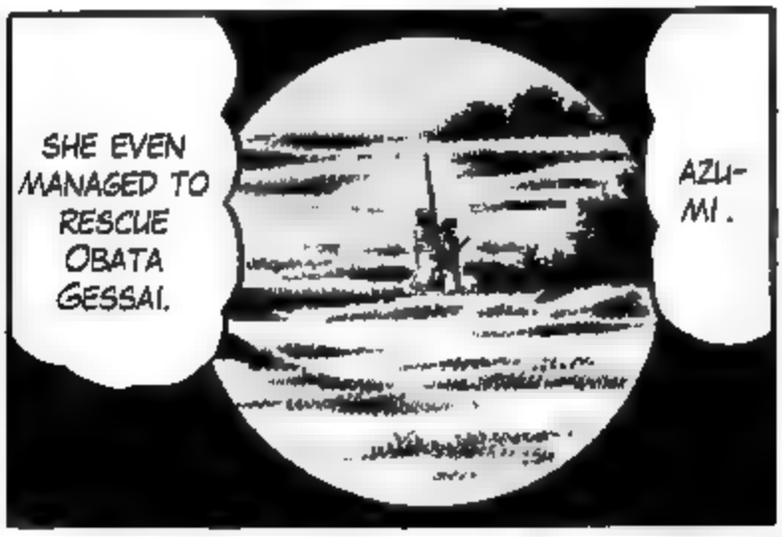


2


THAT KAZUMA...THOUGH HE SHOULD HAVE SEEN HER, HE DIDN'T REPORT IT THAT WAY...
DOES THAT MEAN OGATA AND HIS MEN WERE ALL KILLED BY A SINGLE GIRL?
WHAT A SURPRISE...THAT GIRL, ALL ALONE...


.....
WHAT DO WE DO?
DAMN KAZUMA... WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU THINKING...


SPLENDID.


SHE EVEN MANAGED TO RESCUE OBATA GESSAI.
AZU-MI.


DON'T HAVE ANY COMRADES LEFT, DO YOU?
YOU REALLY...

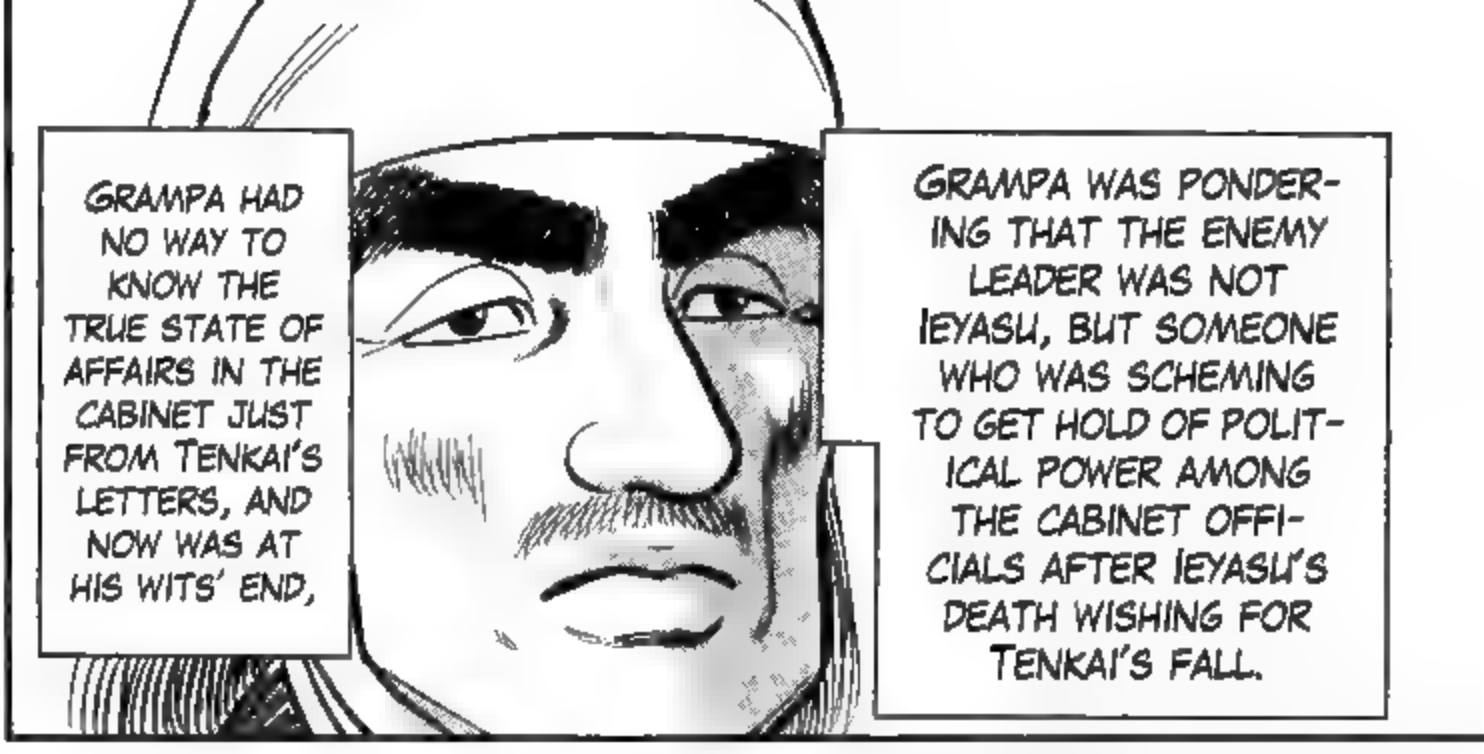

MOREOVER, I HAD CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY, BUT..

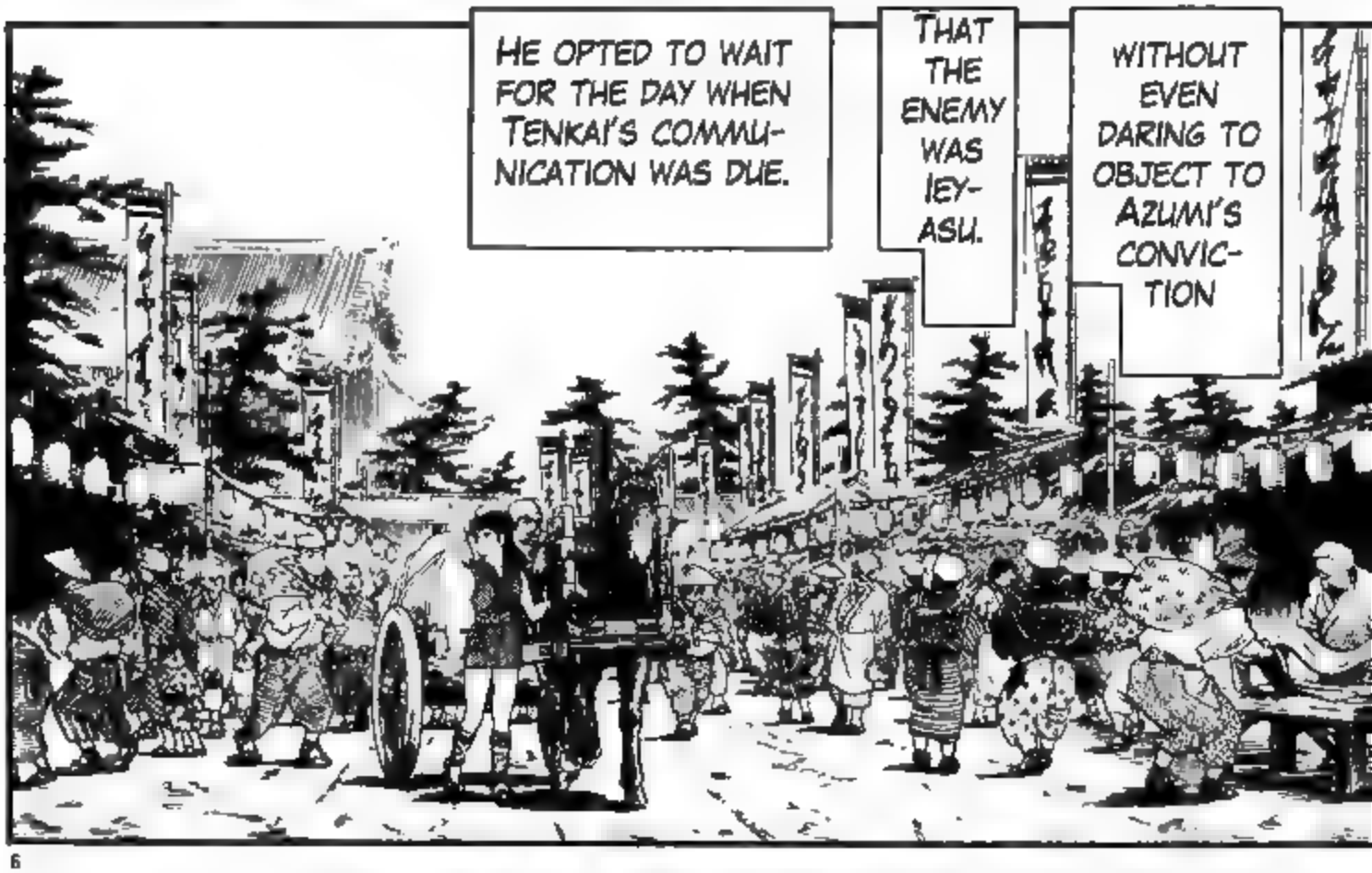

I WAS SAVED AGAIN...BY YOU. .


SOME-ONE LIKE ME...
AND MADE YOU SUFFER.
I'VE WORRIED YOU ONCE AGAIN,


.....


THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE IN ONE PIECE!
GRAMPAAA!!!!!
.....
I FEEL SO REL-IEVED!
.....
HE CLEARLY SCREAMED "I EXECUTE YOU BY DECREE!" AS I THOUGHT, IT WAS IEYASU'S ORDER!


GRAMPA HAD NO WAY TO KNOW THE TRUE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE CABINET JUST FROM TENKAI'S LETTERS, AND NOW WAS AT HIS WITS' END,
GRAMPA WAS PONDERING THAT THE ENEMY LEADER WAS NOT IEYASU, BUT SOMEONE WHO WAS SCHEMING TO GET HOLD OF POLITICAL POWER AMONG THE CABINET OFFICIALS AFTER IEYASU'S DEATH WISHING FOR TENKAI'S FALL.


HE OPTED TO WAIT FOR THE DAY WHEN TENKAI'S COMMUNICATION WAS DUE.
THAT THE ENEMY WAS IEYASU.
WITHOUT EVEN DARING TO OBJECT TO AZUMI'S CONVICTION


IT'S SO LIVELY, GRAMPA!


STOP A MO-MENT.
WEL-COME!
AZUMI, COME TO SEE.


PUT THE KATANA AT YOUR WAIST



B


EVEN THE SIZE FITS!
HM!
THIS SEEMS TO BE AN IMPORT FROM A FOREIGN NATION, BUT...


I WANT TO BUY THIS.
YES, THANK YOU SO MUCH!
HOW IS IT? IT WILL BECOME GRADUALLY COLDER, FROM NOW ON...
PLUS, IN THE FUTURE...WHEN UNDER A SUDDEN ATTACK, HAVING THE KATANA AT YOUR WAIST
CAN HAVE YOU PREPARED TO DRAW IT RIGHT AWAY.
IT'S USEFUL TO WEAR...IT KEEPS YOU WARM AND EVEN HIDES YOUR SHAPE WHEN YOU WALK WITH THE KATANA AT YOUR WAIST.
SO, HOW IS IT?


CAN YOU DRAW THE KATANA INST-ANTLY?
ヒュン
ヒュン
ヒュン


DO YOU LIKE IT?
THEN ...








I'M SO HAPPY! YAAAAY!
Hooray!
Yaaaaaaay!
I TOTALLY LOVE IT, GRAMPA!!

12




GO TAKE A BATH!
IT'S WARM, IT'S THE BEST!
GRAMPA, THE INSIDE IS SO NICE TO THE TOUCH!


.....
LIKELY SO.
YES.
WAS IT MADE BY FOREIGN-ERS?


.....
.....
UM...
THEN IT SUITS ME EVEN MORE, RIGHT!?


YES!
GO TAKE A BATH!



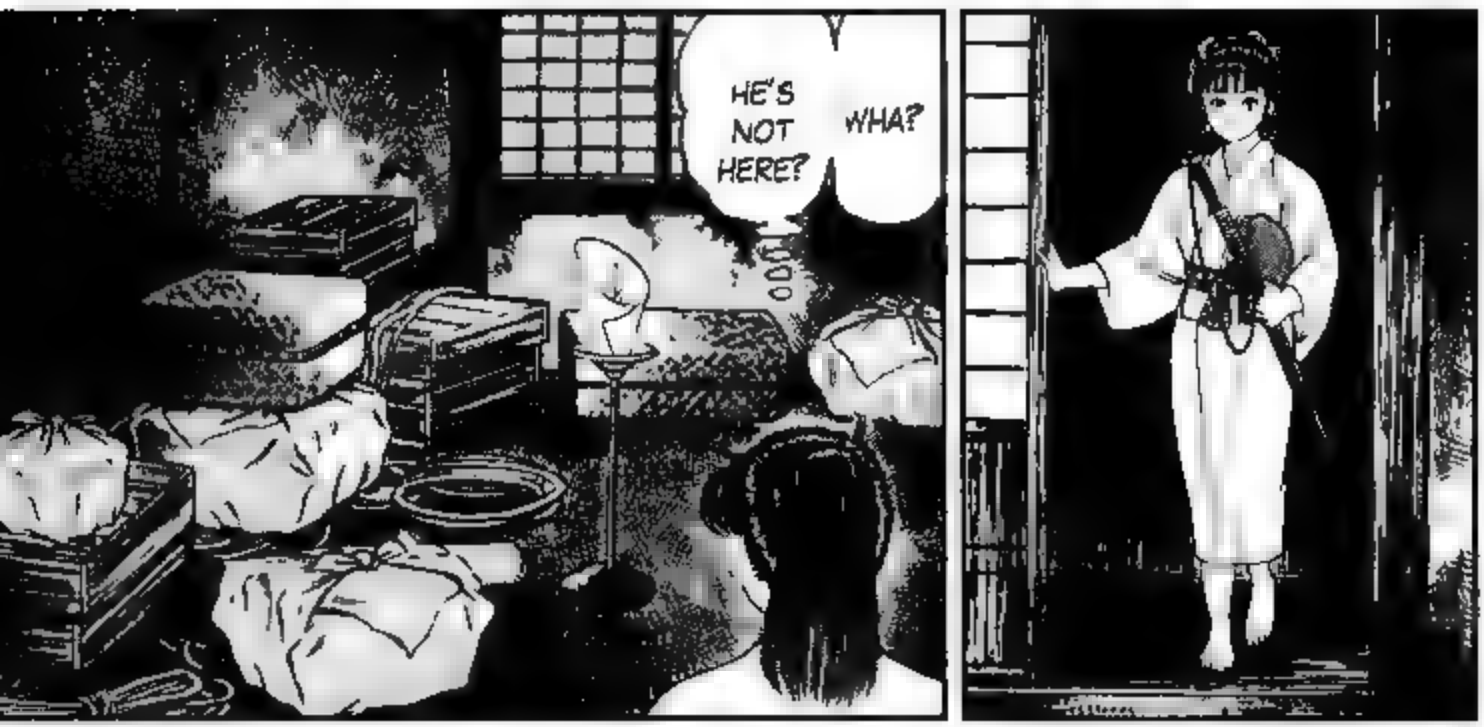

YES!
TAKE THE KATANA WITH YOU EVEN IN THE BATH


HEHE HEHE!




.....

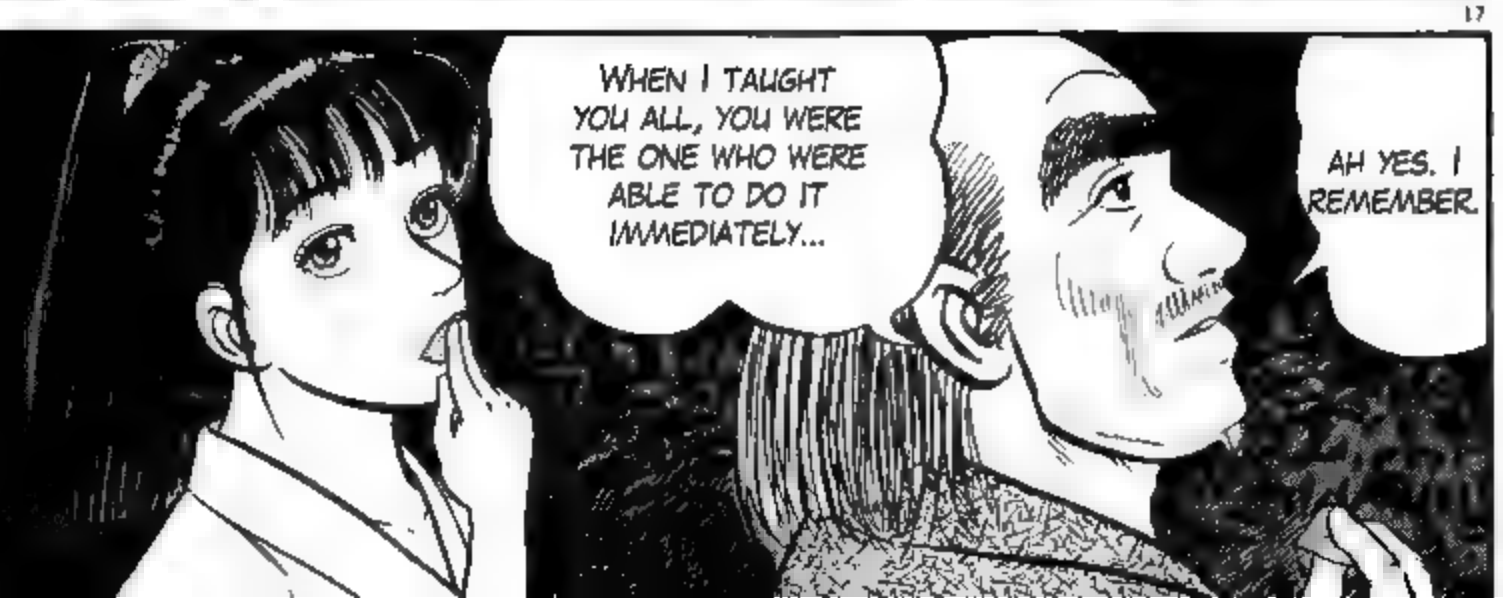



HE'S NOT HERE?
WHA?


GRAM-PA?


CAN YOU DO IT?
YES.
IT'S SO NOSTALGIC HEARING YOU BLOWING A REED PIPE


ヒュー
I SURE CAN!
ヒュ
ヒュ
ヒュ


WHEN I TAUGHT YOU ALL, YOU WERE THE ONE WHO WERE ABLE TO DO IT IMMEDIATELY...
AH YES. I REMEMBER.


ヒュー!


ヒュー!


.....


YES...YOU'VE ALREADY SURPASSED ME, AZUMI...
ヒュー!


WHEN YOU...
WHAT?
LIM.


THERE'S AN IMAGE OF A BODHISATTVA CARVED INSIDE.

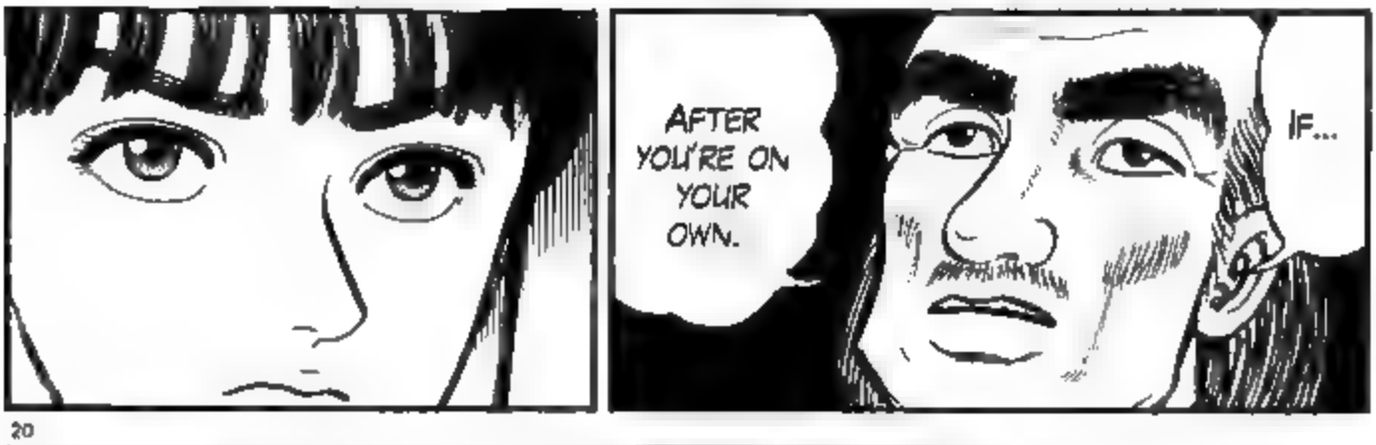

A SEAL CASE?


WHEN YOU OPEN IT...

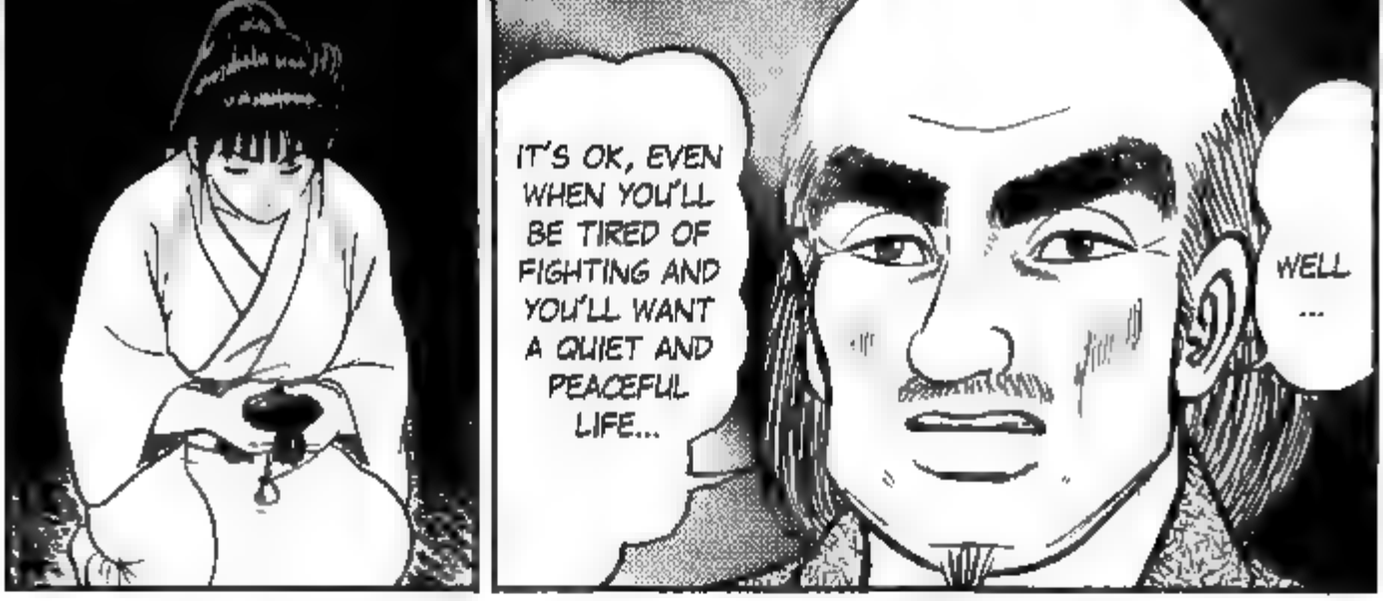

AND TREASURE IT LIKE YOUR TOPS.
ALWAYS CARRY IT WITH YOU.
FROM NOW ON,


"A CERTAIN HIGH PRIEST' MEANING TENKAI
THAT IS A BODHISATT-VA THAT A CERTAIN HIGH PRIEST CARVED.
WHY?!
.....

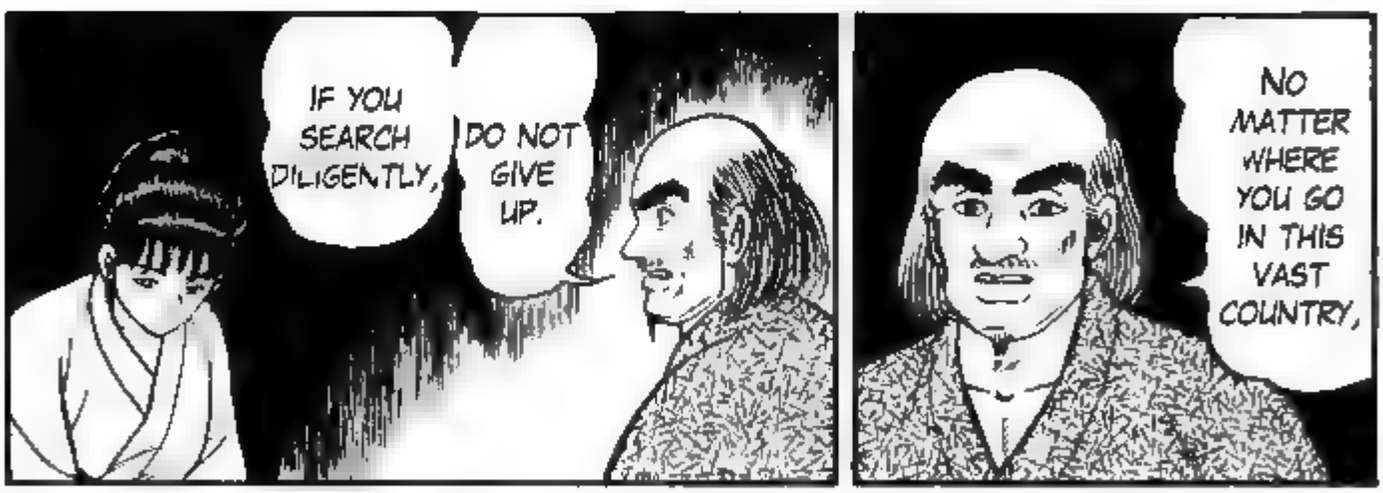

YOU'LL BE TARGETED NOW AS WELL.
UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR APPEARANCE WAS REVEALED TO THE ENEMY.


AFTER YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
IF...


YOU RUN OUT OF MONEY.
OR,
FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN YOU'RE CORNERED AND YOU CAN'T FIND A PLACE TO HIDE ANY-WHERE...


IT'S OK, EVEN WHEN YOU'LL BE TIRED OF FIGHTING AND YOU'LL WANT A QUIET AND PEACEFUL LIFE...
WELL ...


THEN THERE WILL SURELY BE ONE TO PROTECT AND HIDE YOU.
IF YOU VISIT A TEMPLE AND SHOW THAT SEAL CASE BODHISATTVA IMAGE...


IF YOU SEARCH DILIGENTLY,
DO NOT GIVE UP.
NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO IN THIS VAST COUNTRY,


WHERE THE MONKS WILL CONCEAL YOU.
A TEMPLE LIKE THAT
THERE WILL SURELY BE


TREASURE IT AND CARRY IT WITH YOU!
IT'S THAT KIND OF SEAL.

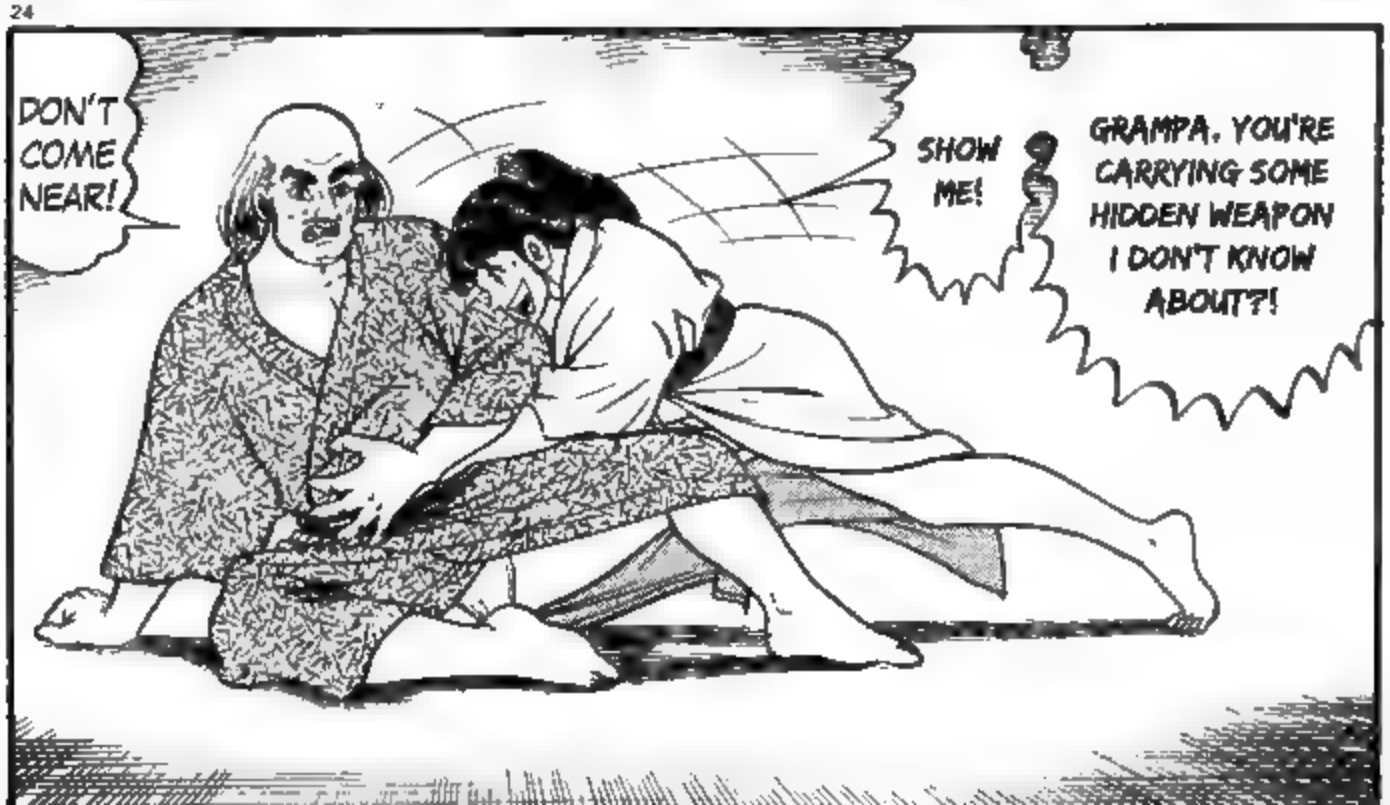

WHEN I'M ALONE, YOU SAY?!
AGAIN WITH THAT STORY !?


THEY WILL COME FOR OUR LIVES IN THE FUTURE!
QUIT IT ALREADY!
I'LL PROTECT YOU!
I CANNOT FIGHT GRACEFULLY ANY LONGER!


I'LL DEFINITELY PROTECT YOU UNTIL THE END!
THE ENEMY IS POWER-FUL!

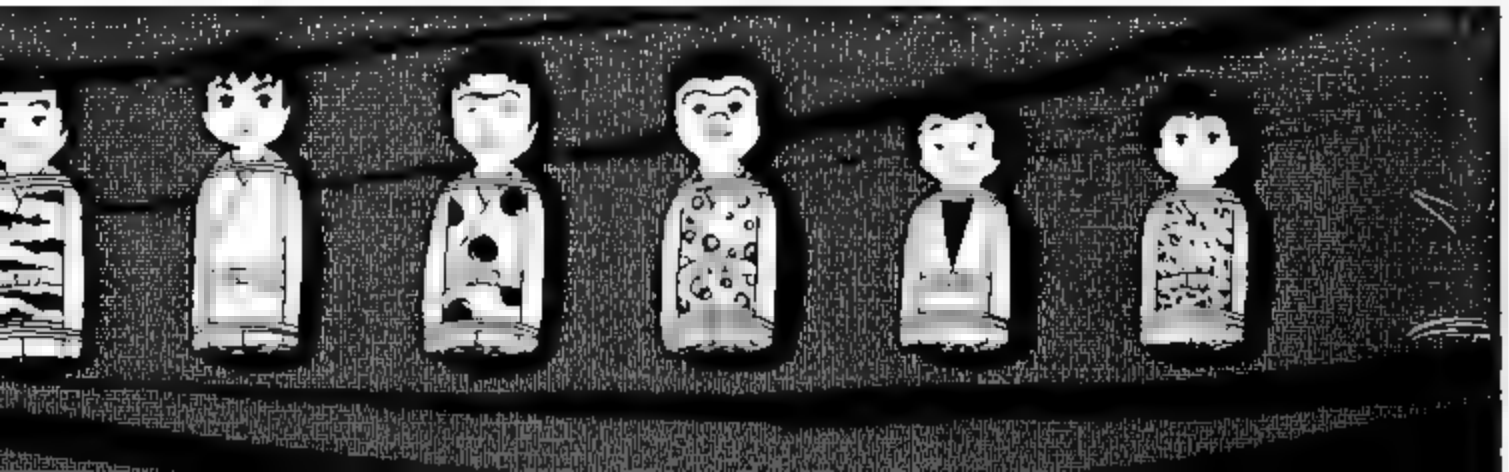

UM.
SO DON'T SAY THAT ANYMORE!


!!
WHAT'S THIS?!


DON'T COME NEAR!
SHOW ME!
GRAMPA, YOU'RE CARRYING SOME HIDDEN WEAPON I DON'T KNOW ABOUT?!


HEE HEE!


ボトン
ボトン




……
……

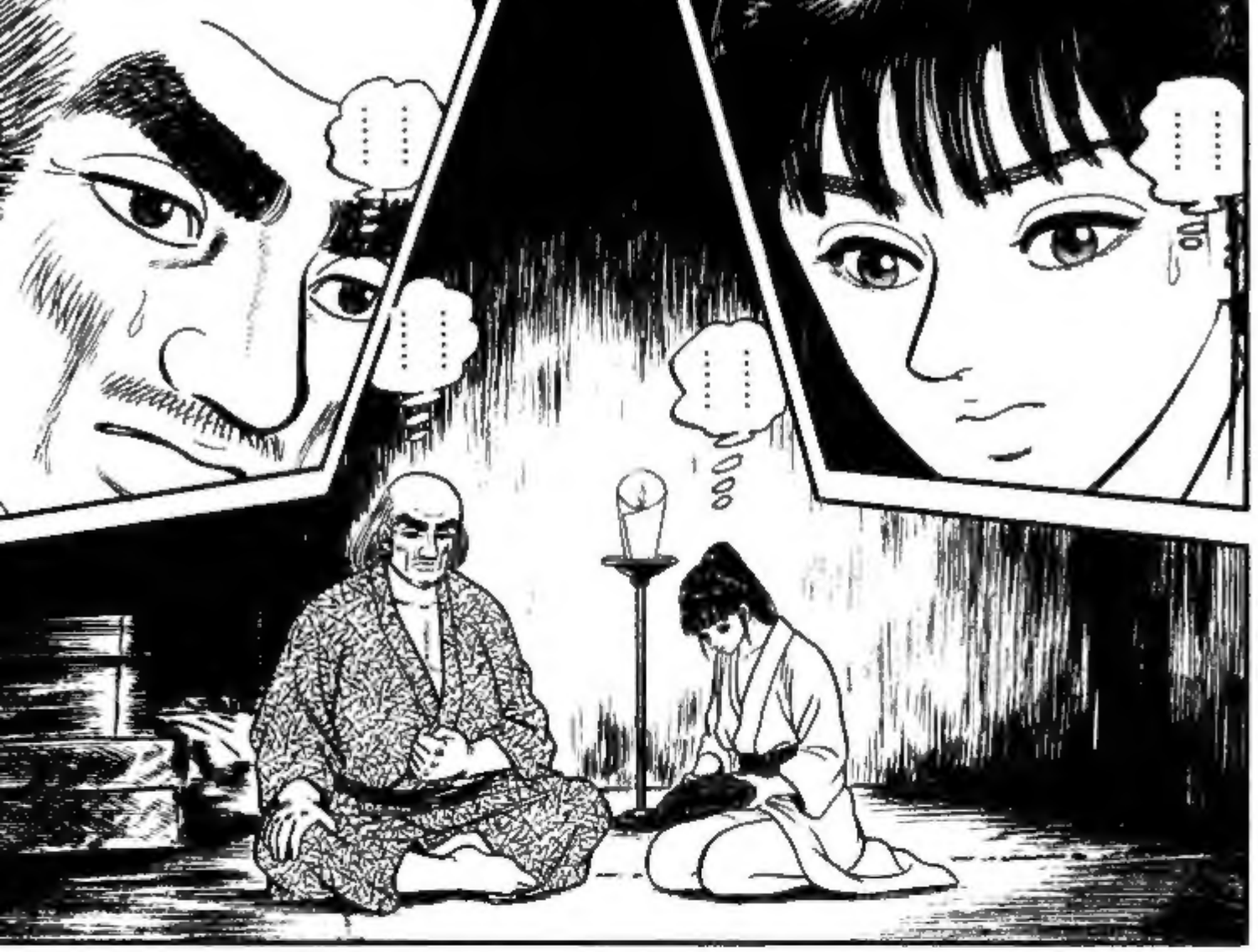

NACHI
…


UKI-
HA…


HYŪGA.


……






SO I RAISED YOU ALL...
I LOST...IRREPLACEABLE PEOPLE...EVERYTHING...DUE TO WAR...I WANTED A WORLD IN WHICH THOSE ATROCIOUS WARS...VANISHED!!


AND HAD YOU CARRY OUT THOSE MISSIONS...IT WAS THE REASON FOR MY EXISTENCE!


AND DESPITE THAT, YOU SAY THAT YOU'LL PROTECT SOMEONE LIKE ME?!


WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?




DON'T TALK NONSENSE !!!


NEXT TIME, I'LL BE THE ONE PRO-TECTING YOU, IT'S NATURAL.
IT WAS THANKS TO YOU I GREW UP UNTIL NOW.


FOR THAT... UNTIL TODAY... YOU...


UNTIL TODAY, YOU...!!!


GRAMPA... YOU'RE MY MOST IMPORTANT... IRREPLACEABLE GRAMPA...
IT ONLY GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT I WOULD DIE FOR YOU!


I WANT TO STAY BESIDE YOU, FOREVER BEING OF USE TO YOU...
AND LIVE ON TOG- ETHER WITH YOU!
30
A- AZUMI ...
.....